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LEAVES OF GRASS

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# LEAVES OF GRASS

BY

WALT WHITMAN

SELECTED AND EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

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WALT WHITMAN

Born, Paumanok (Long Island), New

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## INTRODUCTION

It is not difficult to explain the recent demand in this country for the writings of Walt Whitman, a demand so eager and incessant that the bookseller has often been unable to cope with it. Never before in our history has America been drawn so closely to us as now, when we have brought to happy issue a struggle in which we have fought for the same ideals and with the same invincible resolve. Those ideals, not the less universal because in the minds of many they remain vague and undefined, may, perhaps, be summed up in one word, democracy; but democracy is a word often abused and often misunderstood, and if we would get down to the elementary principles which underlie it, we shall find them nowhere more clearly and vitally expressed than in the life and work of Walt Whitman.

The full stature and significance of Whitman have not yet been widely realized in his own country. But that is not to be wondered at. For, as a critic has pertinently remarked, 'Whitman has epitomized his own people so perfectly that he could make no impression upon them. To be in America so American was obviously superfluous.' It was rather his mission to give America to the world; and it is among lovers of poetry in England, and more recently in France also, that he has come to his own. For while America has ignored or apologized for him we can see in him not only the true spirit of his own country, too often obscured for us by national prejudice, but also the inspired interpreter of that spirit which has united America

with all free peoples in their struggle for freedom and justice, in their desire for a peaceable and brotherly understanding between states as between individuals, in their unshakeable belief in the right of individuals and states alike to live their own life in harmony with the rest. Whitman saw clearly enough just those problems which confront us to-day. He realized, as we do, that the intrigues of ambitious autocrats were the greatest menace to the brotherhood of the world. Thus it is interesting to recall his remark to a friend in 1888, when news reached him of the death of Frederick, Emperor of Germany: 'I am not sure of Germany now. I have no faith in this young emperor, in this William. He is a proud, narrow martinet, reactionary and dangerous, the reverse of his father in all the good things for which his father stood. Frederick would have made Germany a peace nation, but perhaps Germany was not ready for him.' Whitman had, like us, a strong hatred of the tyranny of strong nations over weak, and also, like some of us, a distrust of all barriers which one nation may erect against another in a mistaken keenness for its own prosperity. 'If America is not for freedom,' he said, 'I do not know what it is for. By God! are men always to go on clawing each other—taxing, stealing, warring—having a class to exclude and a class excluded—always to go on having favourite races, favourite castes, a few people with money here and there, and all the rest without anything everywhere?' And again, 'I am for getting all the walls down—all of them. While I love to see America prosperous I do not seem able to bring myself to desire American prosperity at the expense of other nations.' 'But must we not take

care of home first of all ? ' he was asked. ' Perhaps, but what is home ? to the humanitarian, what is home ? ' To him, as to Wordsworth, nationality was simply a larger form of individual human personality, and love of country was only a specialized and concentrated form of love for mankind. ' The maxims of all just law,' said Wordsworth, ' and the measures of all sane practice, are only an enlarged or modified application of those dispositions of love and those principles of reason by which the welfare of individuals, in their connexion with each other, is promoted.' And, like Wordsworth, too, Whitman looked below politics to the great moral forces that lie beneath. ' The free human spirit,' he said, ' has its part to perform in giving direction to history.'

These stray remarks, gleaned from the Table Talk of Whitman as an old man, are significant in their bearing upon the problems of to-day : *Leaves of Grass* records faithfully, minutely, the daring adventures of his spirit, and as we study its pages we come into close contact with a rich and stimulating personality. Whitman's inspiration is less that of an author than of a living human being. He is not primarily artist or thinker, though he is both by flashes ; but few artists or thinkers have had such strange power of drawing us to themselves in a real personal attachment. He offers us his writings just as, if he were present in the flesh, he would offer us his friendship :

Comrade, this is no book ;

Who touches this, touches a man.

Here is the secret of his spell. ' Well, he looks like a man ! ' Abraham Lincoln ejaculated, when he first caught sight of Whitman's splendid athletic figure

striding down a street in Washington. And every page of Whitman's book is stamped with the same impression.

Walt Whitman was born at Paumanok, or Long Island, New York State, in May 1819. On both sides he came of substantial family. His father was descended from English settlers of the seventeenth century, sturdy independent farmers, who lived a hardy outdoor life; his mother had Dutch blood in her veins, though it was blended with a typical Quaker stock, with its noble traditions of simplicity, dignity, and spirituality. Whitman held firmly to the belief that he owed much to his ancestry, 'to the tenacity and central bony structure' as he calls it, 'of his English forbears', and still more to those qualities which came to him from his mother's side. 'The best of every man', he said, 'is his mother.' And the influence of his early life was both vital and permanent. As a boy he wandered at will over the long indented coast of Paumanok, in the summer bathing and racing up and down the hard sand, hunting for gull's eggs, on little excursions with friendly fishermen, or pilots in New York Bay; in winter, when the cold was intense and the shallow creeks were frozen over, off with his comrades with hand-sledge, axe, and spear, to hunt for eels. In all seasons in the open air, riding, boating, or walking, absorbing, as he tells us, 'fields, shores, marine incidents, character, the bargemen, farmers, pilots—always had a plentiful acquaintance with fishermen—always liked the bare beach—the soothing rustle of the waves and the saline smell.' Thus he built up the magnificent physique he had inherited, and formed his tastes and character. He moved in perfect ease among the plain people. There was always something about him of the

imperturbable confidence, the unsoiled freshness of nature; his face had caught the good gigantic smile of the brown old earth, and when he came to be a poet he turned for inspiration, not to his predecessors :

Oh sea (he cries), all these I'd gladly barter,  
 Would you the undulation of one wave, its trick to me  
 transfer,  
 Or breathe one breath of yours upon my verse,  
 And leave its odour there.<sup>1</sup>

And indeed the ocean yielded to his prayer some, at least, of her majestic secrets. It was his early training that made him what he was :

If you would understand me go to the heights or  
 water shore.  
 The nearest gnat is an explanation, and a drop or  
 motion of waves a key ;  
 The maul, the oar, the handsaw, second my words.  
 No shutter'd room or school can commune with me,  
 But roughs and little children better than they.  
 The young mechanic is closest to me, he knows me  
 well,  
 The woodman that takes his axe and jug with him  
 all day,  
 The farm-boy ploughing in the field feels good at  
 the sound of my voice,  
 In vessels that sail my words sail, I go with fishermen  
 and seamen and love them—<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> p. 370. Of his verse he said, 'Its likeness is not the stately solid palace, nor the sculpture that adorns it, nor the paintings on its walls. Its analogy is the *Ocean*. Its verses are the liquid, billowy waves, ever rising and falling, perhaps sunny and smooth, perhaps wild with storm, always moving, always alike in their nature as rolling waves, but hardly any two exactly alike in size or measure, never having the sense of something finished and fixed, always suggesting something beyond.' *With W. W. in Camden*, by H. Traubel, p. 414.

<sup>2</sup> p. 74.

The mystery, the joy, the unobtrusive greatness of Nature have more to teach him than science, or literature, or the ways of man in society. He watches, indeed, with an eager interest, the rapid developments of scientific knowledge, and pays them willing tribute, but he sees in the very positiveness of science its necessary limitations :

Your facts are useful, and yet they are not my dwelling ;  
I but enter by them to an area in my dwelling.<sup>1</sup>

In poetry and romance he recognizes the treasure-house of the beauty and the wisdom of the past, and though never a student he is well read not only in imaginative literature but also in history and philosophy, yet

A morning glory at my window satisfies me more  
than all the metaphysics of books.  
To behold the day break !  
The little light fades the immense and diaphanous  
shadows,  
The air tastes good to my palate.<sup>2</sup>

and again, turning from the writings of philosopher or divine :

Logic and sermons never convince,  
The damp of the night air drives deeper into my soul.<sup>3</sup>

As he reflects upon the weak and petty struggles of man in society after false and enervating ideals he finds strength and example in the peaceful uncomplaining life that nature has given to the cattle of the field :

I think I could turn and live with animals, they are  
so placid and self-contain'd,  
I stand and look at them long and long,

<sup>1</sup> p. 44.

<sup>2</sup> p. 45.

<sup>3</sup> p. 49.

They do not sweat and whine about their condition,  
They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their  
sins,  
They do not make me sick discussing their duty to  
God,  
No one is dissatisfied, not one is demented with the  
mania of owning things,  
Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind that lived  
thousands of years ago,  
Not one is respectable or unhappy over the whole  
earth.<sup>1</sup>

At the age of 13 the boy was apprenticed to a printer and learned to set up type, at 17 he was acting as travelling schoolmaster in Long Island, boarding out with the families in which he taught, at 19 he had settled in New York as a bohemian of the press. Here were his head quarters for the next ten years, and he sounded all the experiences that the motley life of that strange city could offer him. He was a man of immense physical vitality, of boundless energy, filled with the joy of life. He had a passion, too, for music and the theatre, but the music that he loved best was the varied and often discordant sound of human voices in the streets, and the stage whose scenes never wearied him was the world of seething life in which the men and women about him were the players. He still found his happiest hours resorting with plain people—ferry-men and sailors, pilots and fishermen, above all with those men, now, alas, vanished from our streets, who were the epitome of all that is most breezy and most humorous in city life—the 'bus-drivers with interrogating thumb'. 'How many hours,' he says, 'forenoons and afternoons—how many exhilarating night times I have

<sup>1</sup> p. 50.



had riding the whole length of Broadway listening to some yarn—and the most vivid yarns ever spun—and the rarest mimicry. Yes, I knew all the drivers. They had immense qualities—largely animal—but I should have trusted the general run of them in their simple good will and honour under all circumstances. Not only for comradeship and affection—great studies also I found them.’ And he never let slip the opportunity of a jaunt into the neighbouring country, absorbing as before the spirit of joy from the fields, the sea, and the sky.

Then the desire of travel fell upon him—the longing to know more widely the great country to which his heart was given—and he set off through the middle states down the Ohio and Mississippi, settling for a time in New Orleans—all the time supporting himself by journalism; then again up the Mississippi along the great lakes round by Lower Canada and down the Hudson back to New York. Again at Brooklyn he became connected with the New York press, but he soon renounced it for the trade of carpenter and builder, doing himself much of the rougher work. The life suited him—it kept him out of doors; and freed from the hack business of a journalist he could give more thought, as he worked, to the great idea which for some time had been seething in his mind. It was his ambition to be the national poet of America, the first great prophet of modern democracy. His earlier compositions had been facile enough, but had in no way risen above mediocrity, and he knew it. But he never lacked confidence in himself. Matchless songs had been written, he said, essentially growing out of the aristocratic ideal of life and expressive of it—the development

of his own land and the ideals of the future everywhere were still without their poet. He wished to put aside all earlier models and strike out a new line for himself, expressing 'his own ardours, observations, faith, and thoughts,' absolutely independently; 'nothing for beauty's sake—no legend, or myth, or romance, nor euphemism, nor rhyme. But the broadest average of humanity and its identities in the now ripening Nineteenth Century, and especially in each of their countless examples and practical occupations in the United States to-day.'

In this daring break with the past Whitman followed the inevitable instinct of his own peculiar genius. For a poet can only write in the manner that is natural to him, and the true Whitman rarely finds voice save in a language and a rhythm strange to the conventions of poetry. When he adopts the recognized methods of rhyme or metre the result is not music but sing-song or a jingle; when he affects a 'poetic diction' the result is commonplace. To make this assertion is not to defend all his unconventional writing. He was, indeed, peculiarly susceptible to the dangers that beset the path of a revolutionary. He is often too conscious of his revolutionary theory, and true poetry is never written on a conscious theory. From writing simply and naturally, as the heart dictates, nothing is easier than to slip into writing on a theory of simplicity and naturalness, and the outcome is an artificiality as mannered as any literary school. The self-conscious man cannot express himself: a forced spontaneity is the stiffest pose. Just as Wordsworth in his duller moods relapsed into the writing of exercises that illustrate the principles in which his master-work is rooted,

so Whitman, when poetic imagination flagged, poured forth a formless stream of words which is neither verse nor prose, employing a jargon as different from the picturesque and arresting colloquialism of his best poems as from that language of the plain people that he sought to represent. Many a parody of Whitman has been written ; but the only parodies that have damaged his reputation are those which, unintentionally, he wrote himself. Far more than Wordsworth he lacked power to criticize himself. Conscious of his genius as an innovator, he hardened before the opposition which his innovations aroused, and in a foolish spirit of defiance became his own worst enemy. Yet in spite of that he achieved his greatest triumphs in complete freedom from the bonds of precedent. At his greatest he writes as no poet had written before him, and his style and method are justified by their success.

But if Whitman expected that the ' broad average of humanity ' would recognize itself in his verse and enjoy the picture, he was doomed to disappointment. The innovator in poetry has always to create his own public, and in literature as in all else none are so conservative as the uneducated. There is no little irony in the fact that the great democracy for whom Whitman wrote saw nothing poetic in him, preferring to his strange music the most conventional ballad or hymn-tune, whilst he gained his first public among critics and poets bred in the schools that he despised. Only slowly, after more than half a century, does he gather about him that audience whom he expected to rise at his first call.

In 1855 Whitman printed the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*. Continually throughout his long life

he revised, developed, and added fragments to it, but it remained in spirit and in teaching essentially the same. *Leaves of Grass* is the passionate expression of the ideal spirit of democracy as he conceived it—a call to his own people and to the world to enroll themselves as loving comrades in the struggle for freedom from all that checks the growth of the human spirit. His education among the elemental forces of nature and his association with plain and ordinary people had convinced him that the ideals of society, with its worship of wealth and rank, were utterly false. ‘The melancholy prudence,’ he writes, ‘of the abandonment of such a great being as a man is, to the toss and pallor of years of money making, with all their scorching days and icy nights, and all their stifling deceits and underhand dodgings, or infinitesimals of parlors, or shameless stuffing while others starve, and all the loss of the bloom and the odor of the earth, and of the flowers and atmosphere, and of the sea, and of the true taste of men and women you pass or have to do with in youth or middle age, and the insuing sickness and desperate revolt at the close of a life without elevation or naïveté (even if you have achieved a secure 10,000 a year and election to Congress), and the ghastly chatter of a death without serenity or majesty, is the great fraud upon modern civilization.’ For this he would substitute an ideal of simple joy and universal comradeship. His belief in equality is absolute and unflinching. ‘As if it harmed me giving others the same chances and rights as myself, as if it were not indispensable to my own rights that others possess the same.’<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> p. 217.

I speak the password primeval, I give the sign of  
 democracy,  
 By God ! I will accept nothing which all cannot have  
 on the same terms.  
 Whoever degrades another degrades me,  
 And whatsoever is said or done returns at last to me.<sup>1</sup>

What he claims for man he claims also for woman. In his perfect city 'the women walk in public processions in the streets the same as the men, they enter the public assembly and take their places the same as the men.'<sup>2</sup> It is as great to be a woman as to be a man, and nothing is greater than to be the mother of men.' Each is essential to the other ; each is alike immortal and divine.

And the first lesson he would teach both men and women is their own potential greatness. They must learn to put from them all cringing to what is outside them, and stand erect, self-possessed, reverencing, even glorying in the divine in their own natures. With that religion which inculcates self-abasement Whitman will have nothing to do. It belongs to a feudal conception of life and must die with feudalism—the evolution of religion must keep pace with the evolution of human society. He is himself intensely religious, but that aspect of God on which he would lay most stress is the divine man present in a measure in each of us :

I say to mankind, Be not curious about God,  
 For I who am curious about each am not curious  
 about God.  
 Why should I wish to see God better than this day ?  
 I see something of God each hour of the twenty-four,  
 and each moment then,

<sup>1</sup> p. 44.<sup>2</sup> p. 153.

In the faces of men and women I see God, and in my  
own face in the glass,  
I find letters from God dropt in the street, and every  
one is sign'd by God's name,  
And I leave them where they are, for I know that  
whereso'er I go,  
Others will punctually come for ever and ever.<sup>1</sup>

And all true worship must begin by reverencing the  
divine in one's self and recognizing that nothing is  
essentially common or unclean—that man realizes his  
ideal self through the noble exercise of all his func-  
tions. To Whitman soul and body are one, and the  
body is but the expression of the soul :

Was somebody asking to see the soul ?

See, your own shape and countenance, persons, sub-  
stances, beasts, the trees, the running rivers, the  
rocks and sands. . . .

Behold, the body includes and is the meaning, the  
main concern, and includes and is the soul ;

Whoever you are, how superb and divine is your  
body, or any part of it !<sup>2</sup>

Clear and sweet is my soul, and clear and sweet is all  
that is not my soul.

Lack one lacks both, and the unseen is proved by the  
seen,

Till that becomes unseen and receives proof in its  
turn. . . .

Welcome is every organ and attribute of me, and of  
any man hearty and clean,

Not an inch nor a particle of an inch is vile, and none  
shall be less familiar than the rest.<sup>3</sup>

Such teaching was a direct challenge to orthodox  
opinion, and the frankness with which Whitman spoke  
of the body and all its uses brought upon him violent  
attacks from those who were honestly alarmed lest

<sup>1</sup> p. 75.

<sup>2</sup> p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> p. 24.

he might corrupt his fellows, as well as from others who hoped that by the expression of a pious horror they might win a cheap repute for virtue. Whitman was unmoved. He stood through all execration to what was to him 'the meaning of that text, "God overlooked all that he had made (including the apex of the whole—humanity with its elements, passions, and appetites) and behold, it was very good"'. In his view, the repression of all but veiled reference to the relation of the sexes—as though it were a matter to be ashamed of—was the main cause of that prurience and morbidity of mind which lies festering at the heart of the modern world. And this, he said, can only be met 'by thoughtful men and women refusing to blink the matter, but confronting it—assuming the essential sanity and rightness of the mysteries of birth as God ordained them, and regarding them as a central fact of humanity.' 'The subject should be redeemed', he urged, 'from the pens and tongues of blackguards and boldly brought into the demesne of poetry—as something not gross and impure, but entirely consistent with highest manhood and womanhood and indispensable to both.'

But whilst thoughtful men and women tend increasingly to admit the justice of his plea, Whitman has made few converts to that part of his writing in which he has striven most defiantly to drive it home. Indeed, some of his lines upon the body are no more disconcerting to the prudish than to those who are in full sympathy with his creed. The truth is that he fails less in moral than in artistic perception. The artist's business is to present his theme, whatever it be, in such a manner that it brings conviction; and as an artist he is judged by his skill in adapting means to end. It is

beside the point for Whitman to urge in his own defence, 'If I had cut sex out I might just as well have left everything out.' No intelligent readers wish that he had 'cut sex out'. They wish him to have treated it with a surer poetic insight. His fault is not that he glorifies that of which he should be ashamed, but that through clumsy bungling as an artist, and a total lack of self-criticism, he cheapens and degrades that which he most desired to glorify; and that in reckless anger at that prudery which masquerades in cities under the honourable name of modesty, he allows himself to forget that true modesty is as essentially characteristic of the healthy child of nature as frankness, if, indeed, it be not its inseparable complement. Had Whitman been a finer artist he would have paid full homage to the purely physical allurements and ecstasies of sex—the 'procreant urge of the world'—and yet never have obscured that spiritual meaning which was, to him, the explanation of its supremacy as natural law. In this, his central faith, he is supremely successful when he writes as a poet rather than as a defiant propagandist; and if we remove from his works the most offending passages, his true message stands out more clearly than in his full text.<sup>1</sup>

A glowing love for humanity, which has its root in the physical no less surely than it transcends the physical, is the central emotion of Whitman's being, the inspiration of all he wrote. It both explains and justifies his doctrine of equality. There is no patronage in love—nothing of that condescension which is often misnamed sympathy. Love has this divine power, that he raises to his own level all that he gathers in his arms. And if we ask what it is in ourselves that

<sup>1</sup> This course is followed in the present edition.



Whitman calls upon us to worship, the answer surely is our definite capacity, undeveloped as it may be, for love. As he muses upon all the fruits of civilization, ancient and modern :

Underneath Socrates I see, and underneath Christ the  
divine I see  
The dear love of man for his comrade, the attraction of  
friend to friend,  
Of the well-married husband and wife, of children and  
parents, of city for city, and land for land.<sup>1</sup>

To those who denounce him as a revolutionary, aiming at the destruction of all existing institutions, he would reply :

What indeed have I in common with them ? or what  
with the destruction of them ?  
Only I will establish in the Mannahatta and every city  
of these States inland and seaboard,  
And in the fields and woods, and above every keel (little  
or large) that dents the water,  
Without edifices or rules or trustees or any argument,  
The institution of the dear love of comrades.<sup>2</sup>

And for this, says Whitman, as for all the joy and the beauty of life, no man need seek in some distant El Dorado ; for what is best for each of us lies in his daily path :

Will you seek afar off ? you surely come back at last,  
In things best known to you finding the best, or as  
good as the best,  
In folks nearest to you finding the sweetest, strongest,  
lovingest,  
Happiness, knowledge, not in another place but this  
place, not for another hour but this hour,  
Man in the first you see or touch, always in friend,

<sup>1</sup> p. 98.

<sup>2</sup> p. 102.

brother, nighest neighbour—woman in mother,  
sister, wife, . . .

You workwomen and workmen of these States having  
your own divine and strong life,  
And all else giving place to men and women like you.<sup>1</sup>

Here is the central part of Whitman's creed, and whatever its limitations it had at least grown out of his own vital experience: in *Calamus*, that section of his poetry which gives it direct though often mystical expression, his inner life is most intimately revealed:

Recorders ages hence,  
Come, I will take you down underneath this impassive  
exterior, I will tell you what to say of me,  
Publish my name and hang up my picture as that of  
the tenderest lover,  
The friend the lover's portrait, of whom his friend his  
lover was fondest,  
Who was not proud of his songs, but of the measureless  
ocean of love within him, and freely pour'd it forth,  
Who often walk'd lonesome walks thinking of his dear  
friends, his lovers,  
Who pensive away from one he lov'd often lay sleepless  
and dissatisfied at night,  
Who knew too well the sick, sick dread lest the one he  
lov'd might secretly be indifferent to him,  
Whose happiest days were far away through fields in  
woods, on hills, he and another wandering hand  
in hand, they twain apart from other men,  
Who often as he saunter'd the streets curv'd with his  
arm the shoulder of his friend, while the arm of  
his friend rested upon him also.<sup>2</sup>

The reality of his faith soon met its supreme test. For in April 1861 the war-cloud which had for some time been gathering burst over the States, and the conflict between North and South began. It was fought primarily for the Union, though the root of

<sup>1</sup> p. 172.

<sup>2</sup> p. 98.

dissension lay in the slave question. But as in many wars both before and since, those who had right upon their side were less well prepared for the struggle and did not prosper at the outset ; and the high hopes with which they started gave way to depression and almost to despair. In the battle of Bull Run, in July 1861, the Liberation troops were routed by the more disciplined army of the South, and came pouring back to Washington in terrible disorder. But at the head of the North was one of the world's great men. Abraham Lincoln put courage into his people ; and inspiring them with his great idealism, rallied them for a continuance of the struggle. After four years' desperate fighting the Union was re-established and slavery in America was abolished.

Whitman was from the first an enthusiastic partisan of the North. He hated war, but in this contest he saw something grand and inspiring. 'We talk of our materialism,' he said, 'and it is too true. But how amid the whole sordidness—the entire devotion of America to pecuniary profit—this war for a bare idea and abstraction—a mere heroic dream, burst forth with magnificent rays, streaks of noblest heroism, fortitude, perseverance—through its malignant darkness the great National Will below and behind comprehending all and not once really wavering, what could be grander ?' He had unbounded admiration for Lincoln. His belief in the essential divinity of all men did not preclude him from hero-worship. When he spoke of equality he was not under the delusion, fatal to democracy as to any form of government, that one man is as good as another. Democracy means equality of opportunity, that from the mass may emerge those men who personify its own

best spirit, who have at once the insight and the courage to translate its own highest aspiration into action, befitting the time. A true democracy breeds heroes from its own ranks and follows them in faith and loyalty, worshipping the hero, not as a thing apart, but rather as the expression of its own best self. It is no wonder, then, that Lincoln's assassination in the hour of triumph struck Whitman with a grief as profound as it was lasting. He devoted to *Memories of Lincoln* a section of the *Leaves of Grass*, and *When lilacs last in the doorway bloomed* is assuredly among the most poignantly beautiful of the world's death-songs; and all through his life, on each anniversary of the murder, Whitman delivered a public oration recalling to the people the personality and example of this hero.

The part that Whitman himself played in the War of Liberation was humbler than Lincoln's, but no less heroic. To each man Nature assigns his fitting task: Whitman, throughout the conflict and for years afterwards, devoted himself to the care of the wounded and the dying, first on the battle-fields, and then at the immense hospital barracks at Washington. 'It is only,' writes a friend, 'in the light of his work at this time that his life and writings can be really understood—here his whole character culminates. To more than a hundred thousand suffering soldiers he was personally the cheering visitor, and ministered in some form or other to their direct needs of body and spirit—soldiers from every quarter, for strong as were his sympathies with the North he treated the rebel the same as the rest.'

Of his manner of life during these terrible years there is a faithful record in his letters to his mother, and in his

diaries, from which, afterwards, he published *Specimen Days*; in *Drum Taps* the essence of his experience is distilled by his imagination into song. No poet had ever a finer opportunity for learning to know the heart of the soldier: none has turned his knowledge to nobler account. As he passed among the wounded and the dying he took with him the spirit of health, of love, of divine comradeship. His plan of action throughout is intensely significant and strangely characteristic of the man. Before entering upon his daily rounds he prepared himself as though for a festival. After a good rest, a bath, a complete change of clothing, he put a flower in his buttonhole and carried bunches of flowers in his hands. Over his shoulder he slung a huge haversack bulging with little gifts for the sick, which could also be seen sticking out of his pockets; when possible he would bring baskets of fruit, tobacco, lemonade, ice-cream, little presents of money—trifles all of them, but such as would cheer the sufferer—if not in themselves, for the sake of the love that brought them. ‘His magnetism’, we are told, ‘was incredible and exhaustless. It was a fact deeper than speech. The lustreless eye brightened at his approach: his commonplace words invigorated. A bracing air seemed to fill the ward and neutralize the bad smells.’ Sometimes he would read to the inmates, sometimes merely sit by the bedside and hold the hand of a dying man. Often he would write letters for them to mothers, sisters, or wives—many a love-letter he wrote, and words of comfort and of courage to bereaved relatives. Here is a typical passage from *Specimen Days*, illustrating how, for many hours a day through several years, Whitman passed his time:

'This afternoon I spent a long time with Oscar Wilber, low with chronic diarrhoea and a bad wound also. He asked me to read him a chapter of the New Testament. I opened at the close of one of the Evangelists and read the chapters describing the latter hours of Christ and the scene at the crucifixion. The poor wasted young man asked me to read how Christ rose again. I read slowly, for Oscar was very feeble. It pleased him very much, yet the tears were in his eyes. He asked me if I enjoyed religion. I said, "Perhaps not, my dear, in the way you mean, and yet maybe it is the same thing." He said, "It is my chief reliance." He talked of death and said he did not fear it. I said "Why, Oscar, don't you think that you will get well?" He said, "I may, but it is not probable." His wound was very bad; it discharged much. The diarrhoea had prostrated him, and I felt that even then he was dying. He behaved very manly and affectionate. The kiss I gave him as I was leaving he returned fourfold.'

The spirit which breathes through these simple jottings in Whitman's diary finds perfect lyrical expression in *Drum Taps*:

A sight in camp in the daybreak grey and dim,  
As from my tent I emerge so early sleepless,  
As slow I walk in the cool fresh air the path near by the  
    hospital tent,  
Three forms I see on stretchers lying, brought out there  
    untended lying,  
Over each the blanket spread, ample brownish woollen  
    blanket,  
Grey and heavy blanket, folding, covering all.  
  
Curious I halt and silent stand,  
Then with light fingers I from the face of the nearest  
    the first just lift the blanket;

Who are you elderly man so gaunt and grim, with  
well-grey'd hair, and flesh all sunken about the  
eyes ?

Who are you my dear comrade ?

Then to the second I step—and who are you my child  
and darling ?

Who are you sweet boy with cheeks yet blooming ?

Then to the third—a face nor child nor old, very calm,  
as of beautiful yellow-white ivory ;

Young man I think I know you—I think this face is the  
face of the Christ himself,

Dead and divine and brother of all, and here again he  
lies.

Few men have lived more fully in the spirit of their  
creed than Whitman in those strenuous years of un-  
remitting service. His generous spirit had nothing  
half-hearted about it :

Behold, I do not give lectures or a little charity,  
When I give, I give myself.<sup>1</sup>

But this gift from a man passionately eager as he for  
all the joy that life could offer was not without its  
heavy price. No gift worth the having is without its  
cost, and those who imagine that love, the greatest of  
all gifts, entails no sacrifice, is not, indeed, the supreme  
sacrifice, little know its real nature. 'They all died  
about us there,' he writes, 'just about in the same way  
—noble, sturdy loyal boys. I always kept an outward  
calm amongst them—I had to. I would have been  
useless if I hadn't. But no one could tell what I felt  
underneath it all.' Once during the war his health  
gave way, but he was soon back at his post ; then,  
a year or two after all was over and the last hospital  
was closed, he was struck down with paralysis ; and

<sup>1</sup> p. 66.

though after some years' complete retirement he rallied and lived to be an old man, he never regained his former health. He gave his life for his country as truly as if he had fallen upon the field of battle. His belief in the duty, the necessity, of joy in life, was again put to a sore trial. But he realized that joy had its full significance for those only who had passed through the valley of the shadow. He remembered how, a child, wandering on the sea-shore, he had witnessed one of nature's remorseless tragedies. Day by day he had watched two sea-birds :

Two feather'd guests from Alabama, two together,  
And their nest, and four light-green eggs spotted with  
brown,  
And every day the he-bird to and fro near at hand,  
And every day the she-bird crouch'd on her nest, silent  
with bright eyes,<sup>1</sup>

and deep into his soul had sunk the agonizing screams of the desolate he-bird, bereft by some cruel chance of his mate. In manhood he proved this upon his own heart, and out of the memory of childhood had woven one of his most intimate and beautiful songs, 'Never more the cries of unsatisfied love be absent from me'. And now that he had passed through the torturing experience of the war his vital energy was sagging low, and for all his cheery manner he lived much in the never to be forgotten past; so that 'many a face of anguish', and 'the dead on their backs with arms extended wide'<sup>2</sup> would haunt his dreams in sleep. He was sick, and often lonely, conscious that his message was ignored by the bulk of his people, and that others who heard it

<sup>1</sup> *Out of the cradle endlessly rocking*, p. 198.

<sup>2</sup> *Old War Dreams*, p. 356.



branded him as a wilful and licentious perverter of public morals. It was in such a mood that he expressed himself in the prayer of the dying Columbus, in his lifetime discredited and deserted, yet having before him at his death a vision of the future of that great country he had discovered :

And these things I see suddenly, what mean they ?  
As if some miracle, some hand divine unseal'd my eyes,  
Shadowy vast shapes smile through the air and sky,  
And on the distant waves sail countless ships,  
And anthems in new tongues I hear saluting me.<sup>1</sup>

Thus in his uttermost distress Whitman retains his power of hope ; in his belief in what the future may bring forth he is optimist to the last. But his optimism does not spring from ignorance, or indifference to the dark forces that combat it. He is not blind or callous to the sin and sorrow of the world :

I sit and look out upon all the sorrows of the world,  
and upon all oppression and shame,  
I hear secret convulsive sobs from young men at  
anguish with themselves, remorseful after deeds  
done,  
I see the wife misused by her husband, I see the  
treacherous seducer of young women,  
I mark the ranklings of jealousy and unrequited love  
attempted to be hid, I see these sights on the earth,  
I observe the slights and degradations cast by arrogant  
persons upon labourers, the poor, and upon  
negroes, and the like ;  
All these—all the meanness and agony without end  
I sitting look out upon,  
See, hear, and am silent.<sup>2</sup>

He could see and hear all this, and accept it without flinching, though it ate into his soul, because he felt it

<sup>1</sup> p. 318.

<sup>2</sup> p. 215.

to be transitory, and the spirit of man immortal, because he believed intensely in life and in the destiny of all human beings. And so he set himself resolutely to interpret the good that lies hidden beneath the surface of evil. In a poem entitled *Faces*<sup>1</sup> he refuses to be deluded by the mean and haggard disguises under which men conceal their infinite possibilities—the cheat, the murderer, the idiot, in the faith that sooner or later the true man will emerge; and to a *Common Prostitute*,<sup>2</sup> at whom the Pharisee is ever ready to cast a stone, he speaks in language which for all its homely phrasing re-echoes the words of Christ to Mary Magdalene or the woman of Samaria.

‘I myself,’ he said, ‘see clearly enough the crude streaks in the strata of the common people, the vast collections of the ignorant, the credulous, the unfit, the incapable, the very low and poor. But the chief aim of all government is to develop, to open up to cultivation, to encourage the possibilities of that aspiration for independence and pride and self-respect latent in all character.’ He had evidence enough, as we have, of the root qualities of the people when they are inspired by noble ideals, and led by worthy leaders. ‘Grand, common stock,’ he writes, ‘convincing growth,’ prophetic of the future—proof undeniable of perfect beauty, tenderness, and pluck that never feudal lord, nor Greek nor Roman yet rivalled. Let no tongue speak their disparagement to one who has been through the war in the great army hospitals.’ But he realized the need of development. Both for the race and for each individual there must be a future to correct and to complete the past. Thus he could only view our

<sup>1</sup> p. 347.

<sup>2</sup> p. 296.

failures in the light shed upon them by immortality, and with this unswerving faith he never despaired. He always felt at ease about death, and as he grew older its 'heavenly whispers' brought ever more grateful music to his ears, 'Do you think life so well provided for, and Death, the purport of all Life, is not provided for?' he asks. During the war he must have seen thousands die—but death was not among the horrors of war—it was the end of them. It banished hatred and brought to the dead peace and with the living reconciliation :

Reconciliation, word over all, beautiful as the sky,  
Beautiful that war and all its deeds of carnage must in  
time be utterly lost,

That the hands of the sisters Death and Night incessantly softly wash again, and ever again, this soil'd world ;

For my enemy is dead, a man divine as myself is dead,  
I look where he lies white-faced and still in the coffin—

I draw near,

Bend down and touch lightly with my lips the white face in the coffin.<sup>1</sup>

Death is indeed a mystery, but so is life a mystery also. To meet death well assuredly needs courage ; but no more courage than manfully to face life ; and if there is sorrow it is not with the dead but with those who remain behind.<sup>2</sup>

With this faith in human destiny Whitman summons us to his side. Many of his poems are trumpet calls that every man who would not remain dungeoned in conventions, and bound by outward formulas, should follow him on the open road of self-reliance that leads to the city of freedom :

<sup>1</sup> p. 249.

<sup>2</sup> *To one shortly to die*, p. 341.

A great city is that which has the greatest men and women,  
If it be a few ragged huts it is still the greatest city in the whole world.<sup>1</sup>

It is for us to seek it, or to make it, at our doors. But his own experience forbids him to delude us into thinking of his gospel of joy and love and freedom as one easy either to accept or to fulfil. It is a life of conflict beset with difficulties and dangers, oppressed with misunderstandings, calumnies, denunciations. Such is always the struggle for emancipation, whether the emancipation sought be national or political, or that without which political freedom is worse than useless, the emancipation of the mind. Yet the man who is fully possessed with reverence for himself and love for his fellows will not hesitate. What though defeat is as likely as victory ?

Hurrah ! for the conquered,  
Battles are lost in the same spirit as they are won.

Whatever our own lot we may rest assured that in the end victory will go with the pioneers, even if they do not live to reap the fruits of it themselves. For them it is enough that they are on the right side, fighting in the spirit of loving comradeship for the development of a spiritual and heroic democracy :

Not for delectations sweet,  
Not the cushion and the slipper, not the peaceful and the studious,  
Not the riches safe and palling, not for us the tame enjoyment,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !

<sup>1</sup> p. 152.

Do the feasters gluttonous feast ?  
Do the corpulent sleepers sleep ? have they lock'd and  
bolted doors ?  
Still be ours the diet hard, and the blanket on the  
ground,

Pioneers ! O pioneers !

Has the night descended ?  
Was the road of late so toilsome ? did we stop dis-  
couraged nodding on our way ?  
Yet a passing hour I yield you in your tracks to pause  
oblivious,

Pioneers ! O pioneers !

Till with sound of trumpet,  
Far, far off the daybreak call—hark ! how loud and  
clear I hear it wind,  
Swift ! to the head of the army !—swift ! spring to your  
places,

Pioneers ! O pioneers !<sup>1</sup>

That ' daybreak call ' is sounding in our ears to-day,  
and if we pay no heed to it the night that follows can  
have no end. If the world is to survive the wreck of  
these last cruel years and not bring upon itself a wreck  
more deadly still, it can only be through the application  
to life of such principles as a study of Whitman suggests.  
Without it no peace, however just, can be lasting.

Were you looking to be held together by lawyers ?  
Or by an agreement on a paper ? or by arms ?  
Nay, nor the world, nor any living thing, will so cohere.

Many look to a League of Nations to solve some of  
our acutest problems. Yet, as Lord Grey has wisely  
said, a League of Nations is but machinery, and  
machinery is useless unless it has behind it those  
willing and able to work it. It must be backed by the  
active and potent will of the peoples, ready even at

<sup>1</sup> p. 184.

some sacrifice to give it their support. And assuredly we may hope that from this welter of blood and tears the world has learnt its lesson :

Over the carnage rose prophetic a voice,  
Be not dishearten'd, affection shall solve the problems  
of freedom yet,  
Those who love each other shall become invincible . . .  
Sons of the Mother of All, you shall yet be victorious,  
You shall yet laugh to scorn the attacks of all the  
remainder of the earth.<sup>1</sup>

For Liberty, Equality, Democracy, what are these to Whitman but the spirit of divine comradeship ?

These shall tie you and band you stronger than hoops  
of iron,  
I, ecstatic, O partners ! O lands ! with the love of  
lovers tie you.

E. DE SELINCOURT.

GRASMERE,  
August, 1919.

<sup>1</sup> p. 245.

*A most valuable commentary upon the Leaves of Grass is to be found in Walt Whitman's Prose Writings, especially Specimen Days, Collect, and Democratic Vistas. For Whitman's biography consult the Life by Henry Bryan Binns (Methuen, 1905). The finest critical interpretation of Whitman's art is to be found in Walt Whitman, by Basil de Selincourt (Martin Secker).*

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COME, SAID MY SOUL,  
SUCH VERSES FOR MY BODY LET US WRITE (FOR WE  
ARE ONE),  
THAT SHOULD I AFTER DEATH INVISIBLY RETURN,  
OR, LONG, LONG HENCE, IN OTHER SPHERES,  
THERE TO SOME GROUP OF MATES THE CHANTS RE-  
SUMING,  
(TALLYING EARTH'S SOIL, TREES, WINDS, TUMULTUOUS  
WAVES),  
EVER WITH PLEAS'D SMILE I MAY KEEP ON,  
EVER AND EVER YET THE VERSES OWNING—AS, FIRST,  
I HERE AND NOW,  
SIGNING FOR SOUL AND BODY, SET TO THEM MY  
NAME.

WALT WHITMAN.

# INSCRIPTIONS

## ONE'S-SELF I SING

ONE'S-SELF I sing, a simple separate person,  
Yet utter the word Democratic, the word En-Masse.

Of physiology from top to toe I sing,  
Not physiognomy alone nor brain alone is worthy for  
the Muse, I say the Form complete is worthier far,  
The Female equally with the Male I sing.

Of Life immense in passion, pulse, and power,  
Cheerful, for freest action form'd under the laws divine,  
The Modern Man I sing.

## AS I PONDER'D IN SILENCE

As I ponder'd in silence,  
Returning upon my poems, considering, lingering long,  
A Phantom arose before me with distrustful aspect,  
Terrible in beauty, age, and power,  
The genius of poets of old lands,  
As to me directing like flame its eyes,  
With finger pointing to many immortal songs,  
And menacing voice, *What singest thou? it said,*  
*Know'st thou not there is but one theme for ever-enduring*  
*bards?*  
*And that is the theme of War, the fortune of battles,*  
*The making of perfect soldiers.*

*Be it so, then I answer'd,*  
*I too haughty Shade also sing war, and a longer and*  
*greater one than any,*  
*Waged in my book with varying fortune, with flight,*  
*advance and retreat, victory deferr'd and wavering,*

*(Yet methinks certain, or as good as certain, at the last,) .  
     the field the world,  
 For life and death, for the Body and for the eternal Soul,  
 Lo, I too am come, chanting the chant of battles,  
 I above all promote brave soldiers.*

## IN CABIN'D SHIPS AT SEA

In cabin'd ships at sea,  
 The boundless blue on every side expanding,  
 With whistling winds and music of the waves, the large  
     imperious waves,  
 Or some lone bark buoy'd on the dense marine,  
 Where joyous full of faith, spreading white sails,  
 She cleaves the ether mid the sparkle and the foam of  
     day, or under many a star at night,  
 By sailors young and old haply will I, a reminiscence  
     of the land, be read,  
 In full rapport at last.

*Here are our thoughts, voyagers' thoughts,  
 Here not the land, firm land, alone appears, may then  
     by them be said,  
 The sky o'erarches here, we feel the undulating deck  
     beneath our feet,  
 We feel the long pulsation, ebb and flow of endless motion,  
 The tones of unseen mystery, the vague and vast sug-  
     gestions of the briny world, the liquid-flowing syllables,  
 The perfume, the faint creaking of the cordage, the melan-  
     choly rhythm,  
 The boundless vista and the horizon far and dim are all  
     here,  
 And this is ocean's poem.*

Then falter not O book, fulfil your destiny,  
 You not a reminiscence of the land alone,  
 You too as a lone bark cleaving the ether, purpos'd  
     I know not whither, yet ever full of faith,  
 Consort to every ship that sails, sail you !

Bear forth to them folded my love, (dear mariners, for  
you I fold it here in every leaf ;)   
Speed on my book ! spread your white sails my little  
bark athwart the imperious waves,  
Chant on, sail on, bear o'er the boundless blue from me  
to every sea,  
This song for mariners and all their ships.

## TO FOREIGN LANDS

I HEARD that you ask'd for something to prove this  
puzzle the New World,  
And to define America, her athletic Democracy,  
Therefore I send you my poems that you behold in  
them what you wanted.

## TO THEE OLD CAUSE

To thee old cause !  
Thou peerless, passionate, good cause,  
Thou stern, remorseless, sweet idea,  
Deathless throughout the ages, races, lands,  
After a strange sad war, great war for thee,  
(I think all war through time was really fought, and  
ever will be really fought, for thee,)  
These chants for thee, the eternal march of thee.  
  
(A war O soldiers not for itself alone,  
Far, far more stood silently waiting behind, now to  
advance in this book.)  
  
Thou orb of many orbs !  
Thou seething principle ! thou well-kept, latent germ !  
thou centre !  
Around the idea of thee the war revolving,  
With all its angry and vehement play of causes,  
(With vast results to come for thrice a thousand years,)  
These recitatives for thee,—my book and the war are  
one,



Merged in its spirit I and mine, as the contest hinged  
on thee,  
As a wheel on its axis turns, this book unwitting to itself,  
Around the idea of thee.

### WHEN I READ THE BOOK

WHEN I read the book, the biography famous,  
And is this then (said I) what the author calls a man's  
life ?  
And so will some one when I am dead and gone write  
my life ?  
(As if any man really knew aught of my life,  
Why even I myself I often think know little or nothing  
of my real life,  
Only a few hints, a few diffused faint clews and indirec-  
tions  
I seek for my own use to trace out here.)

### BEGINNING MY STUDIES

BEGINNING my studies the first step pleas'd me so  
much,  
The mere fact consciousness, these forms, the power of  
motion,  
The least insect or animal, the senses, eyesight, love,  
The first step I say awed me and pleas'd me so much,  
I have hardly gone and hardly wish'd to go any farther,  
But stop and loiter all the time to sing it in ecstatic  
songs.

### TO THE STATES

To the States or any one of them, or any city of the  
States, *Resist much, obey little,*  
Once unquestioning obedience, once fully enslaved,  
Once fully enslaved, no nation, state, city of this earth,  
ever afterward resumes its liberty.

## ON JOURNEYS THROUGH THE STATES

On journeys through the States we start,  
 (Ay through the world, urged by these songs,  
 Sailing henceforth to every land, to every sea,)  
 We willing learners of all, teachers of all, and lovers  
 of all.

We have watch'd the seasons dispensing themselves  
 and passing on,  
 And have said, Why should not a man or woman do  
 as much as the seasons, and effuse as much ?

We dwell a while in every city and town,  
 We pass through Kanada, the North-east, the vast  
 valley of the Mississippi, and the Southern States,  
 We confer on equal terms with each of the States,  
 We make trial of ourselves and invite men and women  
 to hear,  
 We say to ourselves, Remember, fear not, be candid,  
 promulge the body and the soul,  
 Dwell a while and pass on, be copious, temperate,  
 chaste, magnetic,  
 And what you effuse may then return as the seasons  
 return,  
 And may be just as much as the seasons.

## TO A CERTAIN CANTATRICE

HERE, take this gift,  
 I was reserving it for some hero, speaker, or general,  
 One who should serve the good old cause, the great  
 idea, the progress and freedom of the race,  
 Some brave confronter of despots, some daring rebel ;  
 But I see that what I was reserving belongs to you  
 just as much as to any.

## ME IMPERTURBE

ME imperturbe, standing at ease in Nature,  
 Master of all or mistress of all, aplomb in the midst  
 of irrational things,  
 Imbued as they, passive, receptive, silent as they,  
 Finding my occupation, poverty, notoriety, foibles,  
 crimes, less important than I thought,  
 Me toward the Mexican sea, or in the Mannahatta or  
 the Tennessee, or far north or inland,  
 A river man, or a man of the woods or of any farm-life  
 of these States or of the coast, or the lakes or  
 Kanada,  
 Me wherever my life is lived, O to be self-balanced for  
 contingencies,  
 To confront night, storms, hunger, ridicule, accidents,  
 rebuffs, as the trees and animals do.

## THE SHIP STARTING

Lo, the unbounded sea,  
 On its breast a ship starting, spreading all sails, carrying  
 even her moonsails,  
 The pennant is flying aloft as she speeds she speeds so  
 stately—below emulous waves press forward,  
 They surround the ship with shining curving motions  
 and foam.

## I HEAR AMERICA SINGING

I HEAR America singing, the varied carols I hear,  
 Those of mechanics, each one singing his as it should  
 be blithe and strong,  
 The carpenter singing his as he measures his plank or  
 beam,  
 The mason singing his as he makes ready for work, or  
 leaves off work,  
 The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat,  
 the deck-hand singing on the steamboat deck,

## I HEAR AMERICA SINGING

7

The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench, the  
hatter singing as he stands,  
The wood-cutter's song, the ploughboy's on his way in  
the morning, or at noon intermission or at sundown,  
The delicious singing of the mother, or of the young  
wife at work, or of the girl sewing or washing,  
Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else,  
The day what belongs to the day—at night the party  
of young fellows, robust, friendly,  
Singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs.

## WHAT PLACE IS BESIEGED ?

WHAT place is besieged, and vainly tries to raise the  
siege ?  
Lo, I send to that place a commander, swift, brave,  
immortal,  
And with him horse and foot, and parks of artillery,  
And artillery-men, the deadliest that ever fired gun.

## STILL THOUGH THE ONE I SING

STILL though the one I sing,  
(One, yet of contradictions made,) I dedicate to  
Nationality,  
I leave in him revolt, (O latent right of insurrection !  
O quenchless, indispensable fire !)

## SHUT NOT YOUR DOORS

SHUT not your doors to me proud libraries,  
For that which was lacking on all your well-fill'd  
shelves, yet needed most, I bring,  
Forth from the war emerging, a book I have made,  
The words of my book nothing, the drift of it every  
thing,  
A book separate, not link'd with the rest nor felt by  
the intellect,  
But you ye untold latencies will thrill to every page.

## POETS TO COME

POETS to come ! orators, singers, musicians to come !  
 Not to-day is to justify me and answer what I am for !  
 But you, a new brood, native, athletic, continental,  
     greater than before known,  
 Arouse ! for you must justify me.

I myself but write one or two indicative words for the  
     future,  
 I but advance a moment only to wheel and hurry back  
     in the darkness.

I am a man who, sauntering along without fully  
     stopping, turns a casual look upon you and then  
     averts his face,  
 Leaving it to you to prove and define it,  
 Expecting the main things from you.

## TO YOU

STRANGER, if you passing meet me and desire to speak  
     to me, why should you not speak to me ?  
 And why should I not speak to you ?

## THOU READER

THOU reader throbpest life and pride and love the  
     same as I,  
 Therefore for thee the following chants.

# STARTING FROM PAUMANOK

## I

STARTING from fish-shape Paumanok where I was born,  
Well-begotten, and rais'd by a perfect mother,  
After roaming many lands, lover of populous pavements,  
Dweller in Mannahatta my city, or on southern savannas,  
Or a soldier camp'd or carrying my knapsack and gun,  
or a miner in California,  
Or rude in my home in Dakota's woods, my diet meat,  
my drink from the spring.  
Or withdrawn to muse and meditate in some deep recess,  
Far from the clank of crowds intervals passing rapt and happy,  
Aware of the fresh free giver the flowing Missouri,  
aware of mighty Niagara,  
Aware of the buffalo herds grazing the plains, the  
hirsute and strong-breasted bull,  
Of earth, rocks, Fifth-month flowers experienced, stars,  
rain, snow, my amaze,  
Having studied the mocking-bird's tones and the flight  
of the mountain-hawk,  
And heard at dawn the unrivall'd one, the hermit thrush  
from the swamp-cedars,  
Solitary, singing in the West, I strike up for a New  
World.

## 2

Victory, union, faith, identity, time,  
The indissoluble compacts, riches, mystery,  
Eternal progress, the kosmos, and the modern reports.  
This then is life,  
Here is what has come to the surface after so many  
throes and convulsions.

How curious ! how real !

Underfoot the divine soil, overhead the sun.

See revolving the globe,

The ancestor-continents away group'd together,

The present and future continents north and south,  
with the isthmus between.

See, vast trackless spaces,

As in a dream they change, they swiftly fill,

Countless masses debouch upon them,

They are now cover'd with the foremost people, arts,  
institutions, known.

See, projected through time,

For me an audience interminable.

With firm and regular step they wend, they never stop,

Successions of men, Americanos, a hundred millions,

One generation playing its part and passing on,

Another generation playing its part and passing on in  
its turn,

With faces turn'd sideways or backward towards me  
to listen,

With eyes retrospective towards me.

### 3

Americanos ! conquerors ! marches humanitarian !

Foremost ! century marches ! Libertad ! masses !

For you a programme of chants.

Chants of the prairies,

Chants of the long-running Mississippi, and down to  
the Mexican sea,

Chants of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin and  
Minnesota,

Chants going forth from the centre from Kansas, and  
thence equi-distant,

Shooting in pulses of fire ceaseless to vivify all.

## 4

Take my leaves America, take them South and take  
them North,  
Make welcome for them everywhere, for they are your  
own offspring,  
Surround them East and West, for they would surround  
you,  
And you precedents, connect lovingly with them, for  
they connect lovingly with you.

I conn'd old times,  
I sat studying at the feet of the great masters,  
Now if eligible O that the great masters might return  
and study me.

In the name of these States shall I scorn the antique ?  
Why these are the children of the antique to justify it.

## 5

Dead poets, philosophers, priests,  
Martyrs, artists, inventors, governments long since,  
Language-shapers on other shores,  
Nations once powerful, now reduced, withdrawn, or  
desolate,  
I dare not proceed till I respectfully credit what you  
have left wafted hither,  
I have perused it, own it is admirable, (moving awhile  
among it,) Think nothing can ever be greater, nothing can ever  
deserve more than it deserves,  
Regarding it all intently a long while, then dismissing it,  
I stand in my place with my own day here.

Here lands female and male,  
Here the heir-ship and heiress-ship of the world, here  
the flame of materials,  
Here spirituality the translatress, the openly-avow'd,  
The ever-tending, the finale of visible forms,  
The satisfier, after due long-waiting now advancing,  
Yes here comes my mistress the soul.



The soul,

Forever and forever—longer than soil is brown and  
solid—longer than water ebbs and flows.

I will make the poems of materials, for I think they  
are to be the most spiritual poems,

And I will make the poems of my body and of mortality,  
For I think I shall then supply myself with the poems  
of my soul and of immortality.

I will make a song for these States that no one State  
may under any circumstances be subjected to  
another State,

And I will make a song that there shall be comity by  
day and by night between all the States, and  
between any two of them,

And I will make a song for the ears of the President,  
full of weapons with menacing points,

And behind the weapons countless dissatisfied faces ;

And a song make I of the One form'd out of all,

The fang'd and glittering One whose head is over all,

Resolute warlike One including and over all,

(However high the head of any else that head is over  
all.)

I will acknowledge contemporary lands,

I will trail the whole geography of the globe and salute  
courteously every city large and small,

And employments ! I will put in my poems that with  
you is heroism upon land and sea,

And I will report all heroism from an American point  
of view.

I will sing the song of companionship,

I will show what alone must finally compact these,

I believe these are to found their own ideal of manly  
love, indicating it in me,

I will therefore let flame from me the burning fires that  
were threatening to consume me,

I will lift what has too long kept down those smoulder-  
ing fires,

I will give them complete abandonment,  
I will write the evangel-poem of comrades and of love,  
For who but I should understand love with all its  
sorrow and joy ?  
And who but I should be the poet of comrades ?

## 7

I am the credulous man of qualities, ages, races,  
I advance from the people in their own spirit,  
Here is what sings unrestricted faith.

Omnes ! omnes ! let others ignore what they may,  
I make the poem of evil also, I commemorate that  
part also,  
I am myself just as much evil as good, and my nation  
is—and I say there is in fact no evil,  
(Or if there is I say it is just as important to you, to  
the land or to me, as any thing else.)

I too, following many and follow'd by many, inaugurate  
a religion, I descend into the arena,  
(It may be I am destin'd to utter the loudest cries  
there, the winner's pealing shouts,  
Who knows ? they may rise from me yet, and soar  
above every thing.)

Each is not for its own sake,  
I say the whole earth and all the stars in the sky are  
for religion's sake.

I say no man has ever yet been half devout enough,  
None has ever yet adored or worship'd half enough,  
None has begun to think how divine he himself is, and  
how certain the future is.

I say that the real and permanent grandeur of these  
States must be their religion,  
Otherwise there is no real and permanent grandeur ;  
(Nor character nor life worthy the name without  
religion,  
Nor land nor man or woman without religion.)

## 8

What are you doing young man ?  
Are you so earnest, so given up to literature, science,  
art, amours ?  
These ostensible realities, politics, points ?  
Your ambition or business whatever it may be ?  
It is well—against such I say not a word, I am their  
poet also,  
But behold ! such swiftly subside, burnt up for religion's  
sake,  
For not all matter is fuel to heat, impalpable flame,  
the essential life of the earth,  
Any more than such are to religion.

## 9

What do you seek so pensive and silent ?  
What do you need camerado ?  
Dear son do you think it is love ?  
Listen dear son—listen America, daughter or son,  
It is a painful thing to love a man or woman to excess,  
and yet it satisfies, it is great,  
But there is something else very great, it makes the  
whole coincide,  
It, magnificent, beyond materials, with continuous  
hands sweeps and provides for all.

## 10

Know you, solely to drop in the earth the germs of  
a greater religion,  
The following chants each for its kind I sing.  
My comrade !  
For you to share with me two greatnesses, and a third  
one rising inclusive and more resplendent,  
The greatness of Love and Democracy, and the great-  
ness of Religion.  
Melange mine own, the unseen and the seen,  
Mysterious ocean where the streams empty,

Prophetic spirit of materials shifting and flickering  
around me,  
Living beings, identities now doubtless near us in the  
air that we know not of,  
Contact daily and hourly that will not release me  
These selecting, these in hints demanded of me.

Not he with a daily kiss onward from childhood kissing  
me,  
Has winded and twisted around me that which holds  
me to him,  
Any more than I am held to the heavens and all the  
spiritual world,  
After what they have done to me, suggesting themes.

O such themes—equalities ! O divine average !  
Warblings under the sun, usher'd as now, or at noon,  
or setting,  
Strains musical flowing through ages, now reaching  
hither,  
I take to your reckless and composite chords, add to  
them, and cheerfully pass them forward.

## 11

As I have walk'd in Alabama my morning walk,  
I have seen where the she-bird the mocking-bird sat  
on her nest in the briers hatching her brood.

I have seen the he-bird also,  
I have paus'd to hear him near at hand inflating his  
throat and joyfully singing.

And while I paus'd it came to me that what he really  
sang for was not there only,  
Nor for his mate nor himself only, nor all sent back by  
the echoes,  
But subtle, clandestine, away beyond,  
A charge transmitted and gift occult for those being  
born.

## 12

Democracy ! near at hand to you a throat is now  
inflating itself and joyfully singing.

Ma femme ! for the brood beyond us and of us,  
For those who belong here and those to come,  
I exultant to be ready for them will now shake out  
carols stronger and haughtier than have ever yet  
been heard upon earth.

I will make the songs of passion to give them their way,  
And your songs outlaw'd offenders, for I scan you with  
kindred eyes, and carry you with me the same  
as any.

I will make the true poem of riches,  
To earn for the body and the mind whatever adheres  
and goes forward and is not dropt by death ;  
I will effuse egotism and show it underlying all, and  
I will be the bard of personality,  
And I will show of male and female that either is but  
the equal of the other,  
And sexual organs and acts ! do you concentrate in  
me, for I am determin'd to tell you with courageous  
clear voice to prove you illustrious,  
And I will show that there is no imperfection in the  
present, and can be none in the future,  
And I will show that whatever happens to anybody it  
may be turn'd to beautiful results,  
And I will show that nothing can happen more beautiful  
than death,  
And I will thread a thread through my poems that  
time and events are compact,  
And that all the things of the universe are perfect  
miracles, each as profound as any.

I will not make poems with reference to parts,  
But I will make poems, songs, thoughts, with reference  
to ensemble,  
And I will not sing with reference to a day, but with  
reference to all days,

And I will not make a poem nor the least part of a poem  
but has reference to the soul,  
Because having look'd at the objects of the universe,  
I find there is no one nor any particle of one but  
has reference to the soul.

## 13

Was somebody asking to see the soul ?  
See, your own shape and countenance, persons, sub-  
stances, beasts, the trees, the running rivers, the  
rocks and sands.

All hold spiritual joys and afterwards loosen them ;  
How can the real body ever die and be buried ?

Of your real body and any man's or woman's real body,  
Item for item it will elude the hands of the corpse-  
cleaners and pass to fitting spheres,  
Carrying what has accrued to it from the moment of  
birth to the moment of death.

Not the types set up by the printer return their im-  
pression, the meaning, the main concern,  
Any more than a man's substance and life or a woman's  
substance and life return in the body and the soul,  
Indifferently before death and after death.

Behold, the body includes and is the meaning, the  
main concern, and includes and is the soul ;  
Whoever you are, how superb and how divine is your  
body, or any part of it !

## 14

Whoever you are, to you endless announcements !

Daughter of the lands did you wait for your poet ?  
Did you wait for one with a flowing mouth and indica-  
tive hand ?  
Toward the male of the States, and toward the female  
of the States,  
Exulting words, words to Democracy's lands.

Interlink'd, food-yielding lands !

Land of coal and iron ! land of gold ! land of cotton,  
sugar, rice !

Land of wheat, beef, pork ! land of wool and hemp !  
land of the apple and the grape !

Land of the pastoral plains, the grass-fields of the  
world ! land of those sweet-air'd interminable  
plateaus !

Land of the herd, the garden, the healthy house of  
adobie !

Lands where the north-west Columbia winds, and  
where the south-west Colorado winds !

Land of the eastern Chesapeake ! land of the Delaware !

Land of Ontario, Erie, Huron, Michigan !

Land of the Old Thirteen ! Massachusetts land ! land  
of Vermont and Connecticut !

Land of the ocean shores ! land of sierras and peaks !

Land of boatmen and sailors ! fishermen's land !

Inextricable lands ! the clutch'd together ! the pas-  
sionate ones !

The side by side ! the elder and younger brothers !  
the bony-limb'd !

The great women's land ! the feminine ! the experi-  
enced sisters and the inexperienced sisters !

Far breath'd land ! Arctic braced ! Mexican breez'd !  
the diverse ! the compact !

The Pennsylvanian ! the Virginian ! the double Caro-  
linian !

O all and each well-loved by me ! my intrepid nations !

O I at any rate include you all with perfect love !

I cannot be discharged from you ! not from one any  
sooner than another !

O death ! O for all that, I am yet of you unseen this  
hour with irrepressible love,

Walking New England, a friend, a traveller,

Splashing my bare feet in the edge of the summer  
ripples on Paumanok's sands,

Crossing the prairies, dwelling again in Chicago, dwelling  
in every town,

Observing shows, births, improvements, structures, arts,

Listening to orators and oratresses in public halls,  
Of and through the States as during life, each man and  
woman my neighbour,  
The Louisianian, the Georgian, as near to me, and I as  
near to him and her,  
The Mississippian and Arkansian yet with me, and I yet  
with any of them,  
Yet upon the plains west of the spinal river, yet in my  
house of adobie,  
Yet returning eastward, yet in the Seaside State or in  
Maryland,  
Yet Kanadian cheerily braving the winter, the snow  
and ice welcome to me,  
Yet a true son either of Maine or of the Granite State,  
or the Narragansett Bay State, or the Empire  
State,  
Yet sailing to other shores to annex the same, yet  
welcoming every new brother,  
Hereby applying these leaves to the new ones from the  
hour they unite with the old ones,  
Coming among the new ones myself to be their com-  
panion and equal, coming personally to you  
now,  
Enjoining you to acts, characters, spectacles, with me.

## 15

With me with firm holding, yet haste, haste on.

For your life adhere to me,  
(I may have to be persuaded many times before I con-  
sent to give myself really to you, but what of  
that ?

Must not Nature be persuaded many times ?)

No dainty dolce affettuoso I,  
Bearded, sun-burnt, grey-neck'd, forbidding, I have  
arrived,  
To be wrestled with as I pass for the solid prizes of the  
universe,  
For such I afford whoever can persevere to win them.



## 16

On my way a moment I pause,  
Here for you ! and here for America !  
Still the present I raise aloft, still the future of the  
States I harbinge glad and sublime,  
And for the past I pronounce what the air holds of the  
red aborigines.

The red aborigines,  
Leaving natural breaths, sounds of rain and winds,  
calls as of birds and animals in the woods, syllabled  
to us for names,  
Okonee, Koosa, Ottawa, Monongahela, Sauk, Natchez,  
Chattahoochee, Kaqueta, Oronoco,  
Wabash, Miami, Saginaw, Chippewa, Oshkosh, Walla-  
Walla,  
Leaving such to the States they melt, they depart,  
charging the water and the land with names.

## 17

Expanding and swift, henceforth,  
Elements, breeds, adjustments, turbulent, quick and  
audacious,  
A world primal again, vistas of glory incessant and  
branching,  
A new race dominating previous ones and grander far,  
with new contests,  
New politics, new literatures and religions, new inven-  
tions and arts.

These, my voice announcing—I will sleep no more but  
arise,  
You oceans that have been calm within me ! how I feel  
you, fathomless, stirring, preparing unprecedented  
waves and storms.

## 18

See, steamers steaming through my poems,  
See, in my poems immigrants continually coming and  
landing,

See, in arriere, the wigwam, the trail, the hunter's hut,  
the flat-boat, the maize-leaf, the claim, the rude  
fence, and the backwoods village,  
See, on the one side the Western Sea and on the other  
the Eastern Sea, how they advance and retreat  
upon my poems as upon their own shores,  
See, pastures and forests in my poems—see, animals  
wild and tame—see, beyond the Kaw, countless  
herds of buffalo feeding on short curly grass,  
See, in my poems, cities, solid, vast, inland, with paved  
streets, with iron and stone edifices, ceaseless  
vehicles, and commerce,  
See, the many-cylinder'd steam printing-press—see, the  
electric telegraph stretching across the continent,  
See, through Atlantica's depths pulses American Europe  
reaching, pulses of Europe duly return'd,  
See, the strong and quick locomotive as it departs,  
panting, blowing the steam-whistle,  
See, ploughmen ploughing farms—see, miners digging  
mines—see, the numberless factories,  
See, mechanics busy at their benches with tools—see  
from among them superior judges, philosophers,  
Presidents, emerge, drest in working dresses,  
See, lounging through the shops and fields of the States,  
me well-belov'd, close-held by day and night,  
Hear the loud echoes of my songs there—read the hints  
come at last.

## 19

O camerado close ! O you and me at last, and us two  
only.  
O a word to clear one's path ahead endlessly !  
O something ecstastic and undemonstrable ! O music  
wild !  
O now I triumph—and you shall also ;  
O hand in hand—O wholesome pleasure—O one more  
desirer and lover !  
O to haste firm holding—to haste, haste on with me.

# SONG OF MYSELF

## 1

I CELEBRATE myself, and sing myself,  
And what I assume you shall assume,  
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.

I loafe and invite my soul,  
I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of summer  
grass.

My tongue, every atom of my blood, form'd from this  
soil, this air,  
Born here of parents born here from parents the same,  
and their parents the same,  
I, now thirty-seven years old in perfect health begin,  
Hoping to cease not till death.

Creeds and schools in abeyance,  
Retiring back a while sufficed at what they are, but  
never forgotten,  
I harbour for good or bad, I permit to speak at every  
hazard,  
Nature without check with original energy.

## 2

Houses and rooms are full of perfumes, the shelves are  
crowded with perfumes,  
I breathe the fragrance myself and know it and like it,  
The distillation would intoxicate me also, but I shall  
not let it.

The atmosphere is not a perfume, it has no taste of  
the distillation, it is odourless,  
It is for my mouth forever, I am in love with it,  
I will go to the bank by the wood and become undis-  
guised and naked,  
I am mad for it to be in contact with me.

The smoke of my own breath,  
Echoes, ripples, buzz'd whispers, love-root, silk-thread,  
crotch and vine,  
My respiration and inspiration, the beating of my heart,  
the passing of blood and air through my lungs,  
The sniff of green leaves and dry leaves, and of the shore  
and dark-colour'd sea-rocks, and of hay in the  
barn,  
The sound of the belch'd words of my voice loos'd to  
the eddies of the wind,  
A few light kisses, a few embraces, a reaching around  
of arms,  
The play of shine and shade on the trees as the supple  
boughs wag,  
The delight alone or in the rush of the streets, or along  
the fields and hill-sides,  
The feeling of health, the full-noon trill, the song of  
me rising from bed and meeting the sun.

Have you reckon'd a thousand acres much ? have you  
reckon'd the earth much ?  
Have you practis'd so long to learn to read ?  
Have you felt so proud to get at the meaning of  
poems ?

Stop this day and night with me and you shall possess  
the origin of all poems,  
You shall possess the good of the earth and sun, (there  
are millions of suns left,)  
You shall no longer take things at second or third hand,  
nor look through the eyes of the dead, nor feed on  
the spectres in books,  
You shall not look through my eyes either, nor take  
things from me,  
You shall listen to all sides and filter them from your  
self.

## 3

I have heard what the talkers were talking, the talk  
of the beginning and the end,  
But I do not talk of the beginning or the end.

There was never any more inception than there is now,  
Nor any more youth or age than there is now,  
And will never be any more perfection than there is  
now,

Nor any more heaven or hell than there is now.

Urge and urge and urge,  
Always the procreant urge of the world.

Out of the dimness opposite equals advance, always  
substance and increase, always sex,  
Always a knit of identity, always distinction, always  
a breed of life.

To elaborate is no avail, learn'd and unlearn'd feel that  
it is so.

Sure as the most certain sure, plumb in the uprights,  
well entretied, braced in the beams,  
Stout as a horse, affectionate, haughty, electrical,  
I and this mystery here we stand.

Clear and sweet is my soul, and clear and sweet is all  
that is not my soul.

Lack one lacks both, and the unseen is proved by the  
seen,

Till that becomes unseen and receives proof in its turn.

Showing the best and dividing it from the worst age  
vexes age,

Knowing the perfect fitness and equanimity of things,  
while they discuss I am silent, and go bathe and  
admire myself.

Welcome is every organ and attribute of me, and of  
any man hearty and clean,

Not an inch nor a particle of an inch is vile, and none  
shall be less familiar than the rest.

## 4

Trippers and askers surround me,  
People I meet, the effect upon me of my early life or  
the ward and city I live in, or the nation,

The latest dates, discoveries, inventions, societies,  
authors old and new,  
My dinner, dress, associates, looks, compliments, dues,  
The real or fancied indifference of some man or woman  
I love,

The sickness of one of my folks or of myself, or ill-doing  
or loss or lack of money, or depressions or exalta-  
tions,

Battles, the horrors of fratricidal war, the fever of  
doubtful news, the fitful events ;

These come to me days and nights and go from me again,  
But they are not the Me myself.

Apart from the pulling and hauling stands what I am,  
Stands amused, complacent, compassionating, idle,  
unitary,

Looks down, is erect, or bends an arm on an impalpable  
certain rest,

Looking with side-curved head curious what will come  
next,

Both in and out of the game and watching and wonder-  
ing at it.

Backward I see in my own days where I sweated  
through fog with linguists and contenders,

I have no mockings or arguments, I witness and wait.

## 5

I believe in you my soul, the other I am must not  
abase itself to you,

And you must not be abased to the other.

Loafe with me on the grass, loose the stop from your  
throat,

Not words, not music or rhyme I want, not custom or  
lecture, not even the best,

Only the lull I like, the hum of your valvèd voice.

I mind how once we lay such a transparent summer  
morning,

How you settled your head athwart my hips and gently  
turn'd over upon me,

And parted the shirt from my bosom-bone, and plunged  
your tongue to my bare-stript heart,  
And reach'd till you felt my beard, and reach'd till you  
held my feet.

Swiftly arose and spread around me the peace and  
knowledge that pass all the argument of the earth,  
And I know that the hand of God is the promise of  
my own,

And I know that the spirit of God is the brother of  
my own,

And that all the men ever born are also my brothers,  
and the women my sisters and lovers,

And that a kelson of the creation is love,  
And limitless are leaves stiff or drooping in the fields,  
And brown ants in the little wells beneath them,  
And mossy scabs of the worm fence, heap'd stones,  
elder, mullein and poke-weed.

## 6

A child said *What is the grass?* fetching it to me with  
full hands;

How could I answer the child? I do not know what  
it is any more than he.

I guess it must be the flag of my disposition, out of  
hopeful green stuff woven.

Or I guess it is the handkerchief of the Lord,  
A scented gift and remembrancer designedly dropt,  
Bearing the owner's name someway in the corners,  
that we may see and remark, and say *Whose?*

Or I guess the grass is itself a child, the produced babe  
of the vegetation.

Or I guess it is a uniform hieroglyphic,  
And it means, Sprouting alike in broad zones and  
narrow zones,  
Growing among black folks as among white,  
Kanuck, Tuckahoe, Congressman, Cuff, I give them the  
same, I receive them the same.

And now it seems to me the beautiful uncut hair of  
graves.

Tenderly will I use you curling grass,  
It may be you transpire from the breasts of young men,  
It may be if I had known them I would have loved  
them, ♀

It may be you are from old people, or from offspring  
taken soon out of their mothers' laps,  
And here you are the mothers' laps.

This grass is very dark to be from the white heads of  
old mothers,

Darker than the colourless beards of old men,  
Dark to come from under the faint red roofs of mouths.

O I perceive after all so many uttering tongues,  
And I perceive they do not come from the roofs of  
mouths for nothing.

I wish I could translate the hints about the dead young  
men and women,  
And the hints about old men and mothers, and the  
offspring taken soon out of their laps.

What do you think has become of the young and old  
men ?

And what do you think has become of the women and  
children ?

They are alive and well somewhere,  
The smallest sprout shows there is really no death,  
And if ever there was it led forward life, and does not  
wait at the end to arrest it,  
And ceas'd the moment life appear'd.

All goes onward and outward, nothing collapses,  
And to die is different from what any one supposed,  
and luckier.

## 7

Has any one supposed it lucky to be born ?  
I hasten to inform him or her it is just as lucky to die,  
and I know it.



I pass death with the dying and birth with the new-  
wash'd babe, and am not contain'd between my  
hat and boots,  
And peruse manifold objects, no two alike and every  
one good,  
The earth good and the stars good, and their adjuncts  
all good.

I am not an earth nor an adjunct of an earth,  
I am the mate and companion of people, all just as  
immortal and fathomless as myself,  
(They do not know how immortal, but I know.)

Every kind for itself and its own, for me mine male  
and female,  
For me those that have been boys and that love women,  
For me the man that is proud and feels how it stings  
to be slighted,  
For me the sweetheart and the old maid, for me  
mothers and the mothers of mothers,  
For me lips that have smiled, eyes that have shed tears,  
For me children and the begetters of children.

Undrape! you are not guilty to me, nor stale nor  
discarded,  
I see through the broadcloth and gingham whether  
or no,  
And am around, tenacious, acquisitive, tireless, and  
cannot be shaken away.

## 8

The little one sleeps in its cradle,  
I lift the gauze and look a long time, and silently  
brush away flies with my hand.  
The youngster and the red-faced girl turn aside up the  
bushy hill,  
I peeringly view them from the top.  
The suicide sprawls on the bloody floor of the bedroom,  
I witness the corpse with its dabbled hair, I note where  
the pistol has fallen.

The blab of the pave, tires of carts, sluff of boot-soles,  
talk of the promenaders,  
The heavy omnibus, the driver with his interrogating  
thumb, the clank of the shod horses on the granite  
floor,  
The snow-sleighs, clinking, shouted jokes, pelts of  
snow-balls,  
The hurrahs for popular favourites, the fury of rous'd  
mobs,  
The flap of the curtain'd litter, a sick man inside borne  
to the hospital,  
The meeting of enemies, the sudden oath, the blows  
and fall,  
The excited crowd, the policeman with his star quickly  
working his passage to the centre of the crowd,  
The impassive stones that receive and return so many  
echoes,  
What groans of over-fed or half-starv'd who fall sun-  
struck or in fits,  
What exclamations of women taken suddenly who  
hurry home and give birth to babes,  
What living and buried speech is always vibrating here,  
what howls restrain'd by decorum,  
Arrests of criminals, slights, adulterous offers made,  
acceptances, rejections with convex lips,  
I mind them or the show or resonance of them—I come  
and I depart.

## 9

The big doors of the country barn stand open and ready,  
The dried grass of the harvest-time loads the slow-  
drawn wagon,  
The clear light plays on the brown grey and green  
intertinged,  
The armfuls are pack'd to the sagging mow.  
I am there, I help, I came stretch'd atop of the load,,  
I felt its soft jolts, one leg reclined on the other,  
I jump from the cross-beams and seize the clover and  
timothy,  
And roll head over heels and tangle my hair full of wisps.

## 10

Alone far in the wilds and mountains I hunt,  
Wandering amazed at my own lightness and glee,  
In the late afternoon choosing a safe spot to pass the  
    night,  
Kindling a fire and broiling the fresh-kill'd game,  
Falling asleep on the gather'd leaves with my dog and  
    gun by my side.

The Yankee clipper is under her sky-sails, she cuts the  
    sparkle and scud,  
My eyes settle the land, I bend at her prow or shout  
    joyously from the deck.

The boatmen and clam-diggers arose early and stopt  
    for me,  
I tuck'd my trowser-ends in my boots and went and  
    had a good time ;  
You should have been with us that day round the  
    chowder-kettle.

I saw the marriage of the trapper in the open air in  
    the far west, the bride was a red girl,  
Her father and his friends sat near cross-legged and  
    dumbly smoking, they had moccasins to their feet  
    and large thick blankets hanging from their  
    shoulders,

On a bank lounged the trapper, he was drest mostly in  
    skins, his luxuriant beard and curls protected his  
    neck, he held his bride by the hand,  
She had long eyelashes, her head was bare, her coarse  
    straight locks descended upon her voluptuous  
    limbs and reach'd to her feet.

The runaway slave came to my house and stopt outside,  
I heard his motions crackling the twigs of the woodpile,  
Through the swung half-door of the kitchen I saw him  
    limpsy and weak,  
And went where he sat on a log and led him in and  
    assured him,  
And brought water and fill'd a tub for his sweated  
    body and bruised feet,

And gave him a room that enter'd from my own, and  
gave him some coarse clean clothes,  
And remember perfectly well his revolving eyes and  
his awkwardness,  
And remember putting plasters on the galls of his neck  
and ankles ;  
He staid with me a week before he was recuperated  
and pass'd north,  
I had him sit next me at table, my fire-lock lean'd in  
the corner.

## 11

Twenty-eight young men bathe by the shore,  
Twenty-eight young men and all so friendly ;  
Twenty-eight years of womanly life and all so lonesome.  
She owns the fine house by the rise of the bank,  
She hides handsome and richly drest aft the blinds of  
the window.

Which of the young men does she like the best ?  
Ah the homeliest of them is beautiful to her.

Where are you off to, lady ? for I see you,  
You splash in the water there, yet stay stock still in  
your room.

Dancing and laughing along the beach came the twenty-  
ninth bather,  
The rest did not see her, but she saw them and loved  
them.

The beards of the young men glisten'd with wet, it ran  
from their long hair,  
Little streams pass'd all over their bodies.

An unseen hand also pass'd over their bodies,  
It descended tremblingly from their temples and ribs.

The young men float on their backs, their white bellies  
bulge to the sun, they do not ask who seizes fast  
to them,

They do not know who puffs and declines with pendant  
and bending arch,  
They do not think whom they souse with spray.

## 12

The butcher-boy puts off his killing-clothes, or sharpens  
his knife at the stall in the market,  
I loiter enjoying his repartee and his shuffle and break-  
down.

Blacksmiths with grimed and hairy chests environ the  
anvil,  
Each has his main-sledge, they are all out, there is  
a great heat in the fire.

From the cinder-strew'd threshold I follow their move-  
ments,

The lithe sheer of their waists plays even with their  
massive arms,

Overhand the hammers swing, overhand so slow, over-  
hand so sure,

They do not hasten, each man hits in his place.

## 13

The negro holds firmly the reins of his four horses, the  
block swags underneath on its tied-over chain,

The negro that drives the long dray of the stone-yard,  
steady and tall he stands pois'd on one leg on the  
string-piece,

His blue shirt exposes his ample neck and breast and  
loosens over his hip-band,

His glance is calm and commanding, he 'tosses the  
slouch of his hat away from his forehead,

The sun falls on his crispy hair and moustache, falls on  
the black of his polish'd and perfect limbs.

I behold the picturesque giant and love him, and I do  
not stop there,

I go with the team also.

In me the caresser of life wherever moving, backward  
as well as forward sluing,

To niches aside and junior bending, not a person or  
object missing,

Absorbing all to myself and for this song.

Oxen that rattle the yoke and chain or halt in the  
leafy shade, what is that you express in your eyes ?  
It seems to me more than all the print I have read in  
my life.

My tread scares the wood-drake and wood-duck on my  
distant and day-long ramble,  
They rise together, they slowly circle around.

I believe in those wing'd purposes,  
And acknowledge red, yellow, white, playing within me,  
And consider green and violet and the tufted crown  
intentional,  
And do not call the tortoise unworthy because she is  
not something else,  
And the jay in the woods never studied the gamut,  
yet trills pretty well to me,  
And the look of the bay mare shames silliness out of me.

## 14

The wild gander leads his flock through the cool night,  
*Ya-honk* he says, and sounds it down to me like an  
invitation,

The pert may suppose it meaningless, but I listening  
close,

Find its purpose and place up there toward the wintry  
sky.

The sharp-hoof'd moose of the north, the cat on the  
house-sill, the chickadee, the prairie-dog,

The litter of the grunting sow as they tug at her teats,  
The brood of the turkey-hen and she with her half-  
spread wings,

I see in them and myself the same old law.

The press of my foot to the earth springs a hundred  
affections,

They scorn the best I can do to relate them.

I am enamour'd of growing out-doors,  
Of men that live among cattle or taste of the ocean  
or woods,

Of the builders and steerers of ships and the wielders  
 of axes and mauls, and the drivers of horses,  
 I can eat and sleep with them week in and week out.

What is commonest, cheapest, nearest, easiest, is Me,  
 Me going in for my chances, spending for vast returns,  
 Adorning myself to bestow myself on the first that will  
 take me,

Not asking the sky to come down to my good will,  
 Scattering it freely forever.

## 15

The pure contralto sings in the organ loft,  
 The carpenter dresses his plank, the tongue of his fore-  
 plane whistles its wild ascending lisp,

The married and unmarried children ride home to their  
 Thanksgiving dinner,

The pilot seizes the king-pin, he heaves down with  
 a strong arm,

The mate stands braced in the whale-boat, lance and  
 harpoon are ready,

The duck-shooter walks by silent and cautious stretches,  
 The deacons are ordain'd with cross'd hands at the  
 altar,

The spinning-girl retreats and advances to the hum of  
 the big wheel,

The farmer stops by the bars as he walks on a First-day  
 loafe and looks at the oats and rye,

The lunatic is carried at last to the asylum a confirm'd  
 case,

(He will never sleep any more as he did in the cot in  
 his mother's bedroom ;)

The jour printer with grey head and gaunt jaws works  
 at his case,

He turns his quid of tobacco while his eyes blurr with  
 the manuscript ;

The malform'd limbs are tied to the surgeon's table,  
 What is removed drops horribly in a pail ;

The quadroon girl is sold at the auction-stand, the  
 drunkard nods by the bar-room stove,

The machinist rolls up his sleeves, the policeman travels  
his beat, the gate-keeper marks who pass,  
The young fellow drives the express-wagon, (I love him,  
though I do not know him ; )  
The half-breed straps on his light boots to compete in  
the race,  
The western turkey-shooting draws old and young,  
some lean on their rifles, some sit on logs,  
Out from the crowd steps the marksman, takes his  
position, levels his piece ;  
The groups of newly-come immigrants cover the wharf  
or levee,  
As the woolly-pates hoe in the sugar-field, the overseer  
views them from his saddle,  
The bugle calls in the ball-room, the gentlemen run for  
their partners, the dancers bow to each other,  
The youth lies awake in the cedar-roof'd garret and  
harks to the musical rain,  
The Wolverine sets traps on the creek that helps fill  
the Huron,  
The squaw wrapt in her yellow-hemm'd cloth is offering  
moccasins and bead-bags for sale,  
The connoisseur peers along the exhibition-gallery with  
half-shut eyes bent sideways,  
As the deck-hands make fast the steamboat the plank  
is thrown for the shore-going passengers,  
The young sister holds out the skein while the elder  
sister winds it off in a ball, and stops now and then  
for the knots,  
The one-year wife is recovering and happy having  
a week ago borne her first child,  
The clean-hair'd Yankee girl works with her sewing-  
machine or in the factory or mill,  
The paving-man leans on his two-handed rammer, the  
reporter's lead flies swiftly over the note-book, the  
sign-painter is lettering with blue and gold,  
The canal boy trots on the tow-path, the book-keeper  
counts at his desk, the shoemaker waxes his thread,  
The conductor beats time for the band and all the  
performers follow him,



The child is baptized, the convert is making his first professions,  
The regatta is spread on the bay, the race is begun,  
(how the white sails sparkle !)  
The drover watching his drove sings out to them that would stray,  
The pedlar sweats with his pack on his back, (the purchaser higgling about the odd cent ;)  
The bride unrumples her white dress, the minute-hand of the clock moves slowly,  
The opium-eater reclines with rigid head and just-open'd lips,  
The prostitute draggles her shawl, her bonnet bobs on her tipsy and pimpled neck,  
The crowd laugh at her blackguard oaths, the men jeer and wink to each other,  
(Miserable ! I do not laugh at your oaths nor jeer you ;)  
The President holding a cabinet council is surrounded by the great Secretaries,  
On the piazza walk three matrons stately and friendly with twined arms,  
The crew of the fish-smack pack repeated layers of halibut in the hold,  
The Missourian crosses the plains toting his wares and his cattle,  
As the fare-collector goes through the train he gives notice by the jingling of loose change,  
The floor-men are laying the floor, the tanners are tanning the roof, the masons are calling for mortar,  
In single file each shouldering his hod pass onward the labourers ;  
Seasons pursuing each other the indescribable crowd is gather'd, it is the fourth of Seventh-month, (what salutes of cannon and small arms !)  
Seasons pursuing each other the plougher ploughs, the mower mows, and the winter-grain falls in the ground ;  
Off on the lakes the pike-fisher watches and waits by the hole in the frozen surface,

The stumps stand thick round the clearing, the squatter  
strikes deep with his axe,  
Flatboatmen make fast towards dusk near the cotton-  
wood or pecan-trees,  
Coon-seekers go through the regions of the Red river  
or through those drain'd by the Tennessee, or  
through those of the Arkansas,  
Torches shine in the dark that hangs on the Chatta-  
hooche or Altamahaw,  
Patriarchs sit at supper with sons and grandsons and  
great-grandsons around them,  
In walls of adobie, in canvas tents, rest hunters and  
trappers after their day's sport,  
The city sleeps and the country sleeps,  
The living sleep for their time, the dead sleep for their  
time,  
The old husband sleeps by his wife and the young  
husband sleeps by his wife ;  
And these tend inward to me, and I tend outward to  
them,  
And such as it is to be of these more or less I am,  
And of these one and all I weave the song of myself.

## 16

I am of old and young, of the foolish as much as the  
wise,  
Regardless of others, ever regardful of others,  
Maternal as well as paternal, a child as well as a man,  
Stuff'd with the stuff that is coarse and stuff'd with  
the stuff that is fine,  
One of the Nation of many nations, the smallest the  
same and the largest the same,  
Comrade of raftsmen and coalmen, comrade of all who  
shake hands and welcome to drink and meat,  
A learner with the simplest, a teacher of the thought-  
fullest,  
A novice beginning yet experient of myriads of seasons,  
Of every hue and caste am I, of every rank and religion,  
A farmer, mechanic, artist, gentleman, sailor, quaker,  
Prisoner, fancy-man, rowdy, lawyer, physician, priest.

I resist any thing better than my own diversity,  
Breathe the air but leave plenty after me,  
And am not stuck up, and am in my place.

(The moth and the fish-eggs are in their place,  
The bright suns I see and the dark suns I cannot see  
are in their place,  
The palpable is in its place and the impalpable is in  
its place.)

## 17

These are really the thoughts of all men in all ages and  
lands, they are not original with me,  
If they are not yours as much as mine they are nothing,  
or next to nothing,  
If they are not the riddle and the untying of the riddle,  
they are nothing,  
If they are not just as close as they are distant they  
are nothing.

This is the grass that grows wherever the land is and  
the water is,  
This the common air that bathes the globe.

## 18

With music strong I come, with my cornets and my  
drums,  
I play not marches for accepted victors only, I play  
marches for conquer'd and slain persons.

Have you heard that it was good to gain the day ?  
I also say it is good to fall, battles are lost in the same  
spirit in which they are won.

I beat and pound for the dead,  
I blow through my embouchures my loudest and gayest  
for them.

Vivas to those who have fail'd !  
And to those whose war-vessels sank in the sea !  
And to those themselves who sank in the sea !

And to all generals that lost engagements, and all overcome heroes !  
And the numberless unknown heroes equal to the greatest heroes known !

## 19

This is the meal equally set, this the meat for natural hunger,  
It is for the wicked just the same as the righteous,  
I make appointments with all,  
I will not have a single person slighted or left away,  
The kept-woman, sponger, thief, are hereby invited,  
The heavy-lipp'd slave is invited, the venerealee is invited ;  
There shall be no difference between them and the rest.  
This is the press of a bashful hand, this the float and odour of hair,  
This the touch of my lips to yours, this the murmur of yearning,  
This the far-off depth and height reflecting my own face,  
This the thoughtful merge of myself, and the outlet again.

Do you guess I have some intricate purpose ?  
Well I have, for the Fourth-month showers have, and the mica on the side of a rock has.

Do you take it I would astonish ?  
Does the daylight astonish ? does the early redstart twittering through the woods ?  
Do I astonish more than they ?

This hour I tell things in confidence,  
I might not tell everybody, but I will tell you.

## 20

Who goes there ? hankering, gross, mystical, nude ;  
How is it I extract strength from the beef I eat ?

What is a man anyhow ? what am I ? what are you ?

All I mark as my own you shall offset it with your own,  
Else it were time lost listening to me.

I do not snivel that snivel the world over,  
That months are vacuums and the ground but wallow  
and filth.

Whimpering and truckling fold with powders for  
invalids, conformity goes to the fourth-remov'd,  
I wear my hat as I please indoors or out.

Why should I pray ? why should I venerate and be  
ceremonious ?

Having pried through the strata, analysed to a hair,  
counsel'd with doctors and calculated close,  
I find no sweeter fat than sticks to my own bones.

In all people I see myself, none more and not one  
a barley-corn less,  
And the good or bad I say of myself I say of them

I know I am solid and sound,  
To me the converging objects of the universe perpetually flow,  
All are written to me, and I must get what the writing  
means.

I know I am deathless,  
I know this orbit of mine cannot be swept by a carpenter's compass,  
I know I shall not pass like a child's carlacue cut with  
a burnt stick at night.

I know I am august,  
I do not trouble my spirit to vindicate itself or be  
understood,  
I see that the elementary laws never apologize,  
(I reckon I behave no prouder than the level I plant  
my house by, after all.)

I exist as I am, that is enough,  
If no other in the world be aware I sit content,  
And if each and all be aware I sit content.

One world is aware and by far the largest to me, and  
that is myself,  
And whether I come to my own to-day or in ten  
thousand or ten million years,  
I can cheerfully take it now, or with equal cheerfulness  
I can wait.

My foothold is tenon'd and mortis'd in granite,  
I laugh at what you call dissolution,  
And I know the amplitude of time.

## 21

I am the poet of the Body and I am the poet of the Soul,  
The pleasures of heaven are with me and the pains of  
hell are with me,  
The first I graft and increase upon myself, the latter  
I translate into a new tongue.

I am the poet of the woman the same as the man,  
And I say it is as great to be a woman as to be a man,  
And I say there is nothing greater than the mother of  
men.

I chant the chant of dilation or pride,  
We have had ducking and deprecating about enough,  
I show that size is only development.

Have you outstript the rest ? are you the President ?  
It is a trifle, they will more than arrive there every one,  
and still pass on.

I am he that walks with the tender and growing night,  
I call to the earth and sea half-held by the night.

Press close bare-bosom'd night—press close magnetic  
nourishing night !  
Night of south winds—night of the large few stars !  
Still nodding night—mad naked summer night.

Smile O voluptuous cool-breath'd earth !  
Earth of the slumbering and liquid trees !  
Earth of departed sunset—earth of the mountains  
misty-topt !

Earth of the vitreous pour of the full moon just tinged  
with blue !

Earth of shine and dark mottling the tide of the river !

Earth of the limpid grey of clouds brighter and clearer  
for my sake !

Far-swooping elbow'd earth—rich apple-blossom'd  
earth !

Smile, for your lover comes.

Prodigal, you have given me love—therefore I to you  
give love !

O unspeakable passionate love.

## 22

You sea ! I resign myself to you also—I guess what  
you mean,

I behold from the beach your crooked inviting fingers,

I believe you refuse to go back without feeling of me,

We must have a turn together, I undress, hurry me  
out of sight of the land,

Cushion me soft, rock me in billowy drowse,

Dash me with amorous wet, I can repay you.

Sea of stretch'd ground-swells,

Sea breathing broad and convulsive breaths,

Sea of the brine of life and of unshovell'd yet always-  
ready graves,

Howler and scooper of storms, capricious and dainty  
sea,

I am integral with you, I too am of one phase and of  
all phases.

I am he attesting sympathy,

(Shall I make my list of things in the house and skip  
the house that supports them ?)

I am not the poet of goodness only, I do not decline  
to be the poet of wickedness also.

What blurt is this about virtue and about vice ?

Evil propels me and reform of evil propels me, I stand  
indifferent,

My gait is no fault-finder's or rejecter's gait,  
I moisten the roots of all that has grown.

Did you fear some scrofula out of the unflagging  
pregnancy ?

Did you guess the celestial laws are yet to be work'd  
over and rectified ?

I find one side a balance and the antipodal side a  
balance,  
Soft doctrine as steady help as stable doctrine,  
Thoughts and deeds of the present our rouse and early  
start.

This minute that comes to me over the past decillions,  
There is no better than it and now.

What behaved well in the past or behaves well to-day  
is not such a wonder,

The wonder is always and always how there can be  
a mean man or an infidel.

## 23

Endless unfolding of words of ages !  
And mine a word of the modern, the word En-Masse.

A word of the faith that never balks,  
Here or henceforward it is all the same to me, I accept  
Time absolutely.

It alone is without flaw, it alone rounds and completes  
all,  
That mystic baffling wonder alone completes all.

I accept Reality and dare not question it,  
Materialism first and last imbuig.

Hurrah for positive science ! long live exact demon-  
stration !

Fetch stonecrop mixt with cedar and branches of lilac,  
This is the lexicographer, this the chemist, this made  
a grammar of the old cartouches,



These mariners put the ship through dangerous unknown seas,  
This is the geologist, this works with the scalpel, and  
this is a mathematician.

Gentlemen, to you the first honours always !  
Your facts are useful, and yet they are not my dwelling,  
I but enter by them to an area of my dwelling.

Less the reminders of properties told my words,  
And more the reminders they of life untold, and of  
freedom and extrication,  
And make short account of neuters and geldings, and  
favour men and women fully equipt,  
And beat the gong of revolt, and stop with fugitives  
and them that plot and conspire.

## 24

Walt Whitman, a kosmos, of Manhattan the son,  
Turbulent, fleshy, sensual, eating, drinking and breeding,  
No sentimentalist, no stander above men and women  
or apart from them,  
No more modest than immodest.

Unscrew the locks from the doors !  
Unscrew the doors themselves from their jambs !

Whoever degrades another degrades me,  
And whatever is done or said returns at last to me.

Through me the afflatus surging and surging, through  
me the current and index.

I speak the pass-word primaeval, I give the sign of  
democracy,

By God ! I will accept nothing which all cannot have  
their counterpart of on the same terms.

Through me many long dumb voices,  
Voices of the interminable generations of prisoners and  
slaves,

Voices of the diseas'd and despairing and of thieves  
and dwarfs,

Voices of cycles of preparation and accretion,  
And of the threads that connect the stars, and of  
    wombs and of the father-stuff,  
And of the rights of them the others are down upon,  
Of the deform'd, trivial, flat, foolish, despised,  
Fog in the air, beetles rolling balls of dung.

Through me forbidden voices,  
Voices of sexes and lusts, voices veil'd and I remove  
    the veil,  
Voices indecent by me clarified and transfigur'd.

I believe in the flesh and the appetites,  
Seeing, hearing, feeling, are miracles, and each part  
    and tag of me is a miracle.

Divine am I inside and out, and I make holy whatever  
    I touch or am touch'd from,  
The scent of these arm-pits aroma finer than prayer,  
This head more than churches, bibles, and all the creeds.

If I worship one thing more than another it shall be  
    the spread of my own body, or any part of it,  
Translucent mould of me it shall be you !  
Shaded ledges and rests it shall be you !  
I dote on myself, there is that lot of me and all so  
    luscious,

Each moment and whatever happens thrills me with joy,  
I cannot tell how my ankles bend, nor whence the  
    cause of my faintest wish,  
Nor the cause of the friendship I emit, nor the cause  
    of the friendship I take again.

That I walk up my stoop, I pause to consider if it  
    really be,  
A morning-glory at my window satisfies me more than  
    the metaphysics of books.

To behold the day-break !  
The little light fades the immense and diaphanous  
    shadows,  
The air tastes good to my palate.

Dazzling and tremendous how quick the sun-rise would  
kill me,  
If I could not now and always send sun-rise out of  
me.

We also ascend dazzling and tremendous as the sun,  
We found our own O my soul in the calm and cool of  
the day-break.

My voice goes after what my eyes cannot reach,  
With the twirl of my tongue I encompass worlds and  
volumes of worlds.

Speech is the twin of my vision, it is unequal to measure  
itself,

It provokes me forever, it says sarcastically,  
*Wait you contain enough, why don't you let it out then ?*

Come now I will not be tantalized, you conceive too  
much of articulation,  
Do you not know O speech how the buds beneath you  
are folded ?

Waiting in gloom, protected by frost,  
The dirt receding before my prophetic screams,  
I underlying causes to balance them at last,  
My knowledge my live parts, it keeping tally with the  
meaning of all things,

Happiness, (which whoever hears me let him or her set  
out in search of this day.)

My final merit I refuse you, I refuse putting from me  
what I really am,  
Encompass worlds, but never try to encompass me,  
I crowd your sleekest and best by simply looking  
toward you.

Writing and talk do not prove me,  
I carry the plenum of proof and every thing else in my  
face,  
With the hush of my lips I wholly confound the skeptic.

## 26

Now I will do nothing but listen,  
To accrue what I hear into this song, to let sounds  
contribute toward it.

I hear bravuras of birds, bustle of growing wheat,  
gossip of flames, clack of sticks cooking my meals,  
I hear the sound I love, the sound of the human  
voice,

I hear all sounds running together, combined, fused or  
following,

Sounds of the city and sounds out of the city, sounds  
of the day and night,

Talkative young ones to those that like them, the loud  
laugh of work-people at their meals,

The angry base of disjointed friendship, the faint tones  
of the sick,

The judge with hands tight to the desk, his pallid lips  
pronouncing a death-sentence,

The heave'e'yo of stevedores unlading ships by the  
wharves, the refrain of the anchor-lifters,

The ring of alarm-bells, the cry of fire, the whirr of  
swift-streaking engines and hose-carts with pre-  
monitory tinkles and colour'd lights,

The steam-whistle, the solid roll of the train of ap-  
proaching cars,

The slow march play'd at the head of the association  
marching two and two,

(They go to guard some corpse, the flag-tops are draped  
with black muslin.)

I hear the violoncello, ('tis the young man's heart's  
complaint,)

I hear the key'd cornet, it glides quickly in through  
my ears,

It shakes mad-sweet pangs through my belly and  
breast.

I hear the chorus, it is a grand opera,  
Ah this indeed is music—this suits me.

A tenor large and fresh as the creation fills me,  
 The orbic flex of his mouth is pouring and filling me full.  
 I hear the train'd soprano (what work with hers is  
     this ?)  
 The orchestra whirls me wider than Uranus flies,  
 It wrenches such ardours from me I did not know  
     I possess'd them,  
 It sails me, I dab with bare feet, they are lick'd by the  
     indolent waves,  
 I am out by bitter and angry hail, I lose my breath,  
 Steep'd amid honey'd morphine, my windpipe throttled  
     in fakes of death,  
 At length let up again to feel the puzzle of puzzles,  
 And that we call Being.

## 27

To be in any form, what is that ?  
 (Round and round we go, all of us, and ever come back  
     thither,)  
 If nothing lay more develop'd the quahaug in its callous  
     shell were enough.  
 Mine is no callous shell,  
 I have instant conductors all over me whether I pass  
     or stop,  
 They seize every object and lead it harmlessly through  
     me.  
 I merely stir, press, feel with my fingers, and am happy,  
 To touch my person to some one else's is about as  
     much as I can stand.

## 28

Blind loving wrestling touch, sheath'd hooded sharp-  
     tooth'd touch !  
 Did it make you ache so, leaving me ?  
 Parting track'd by arriving, perpetual payment of per-  
     petual loan,  
 Rich showering rain, and recompense richer afterward.

Sprouts take and accumulate, stand by the curb prolific  
and vital,  
Landscapes projected masculine, full-sized and golden.

## 29

All truths wait in all things,  
They neither hasten their own delivery nor resist it,  
They do not need the obstetric forceps of the surgeon,  
The insignificant is as big to me as any,  
(What is less or more than a touch ?)

Logic and sermons never convince,  
The damp of the night drives deeper into my soul.

(Only what proves itself to every man and woman is so,  
Only what nobody denies is so.)

A minute and a drop of me settle my brain,  
I believe the soggy clods shall become lovers and lamps,  
And a compend of compends is the meat of a man or  
woman,

And a summit and flower there is the feeling they have  
for each other,

And they are to branch boundlessly out of that lesson  
until it becomes omnific,

And until one and all shall delight us, and we them.

## 30

I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey  
work of the stars,

And the pismire is equally perfect, and a grain of sand,  
and the egg of the wren,

And the tree-toad is a chef-d'œuvre for the highest,

And the running blackberry would adorn the parlours  
of heaven,

And the narrowest hinge in my hand puts to scorn all  
machinery,

And the cow crunching with depress'd head surpasses  
any statue,

And a mouse is miracle enough to stagger sextillions  
of infidels.

## 31

I think I could turn and live with animals, they are  
so placid and self-contain'd,  
I stand and look at them long and long.

They do not sweat and whine about their condition,  
They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their  
sins,

They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God,  
Not one is dissatisfied, not one is demented with the  
mania of owning things,

Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind that lived  
thousands of years ago,

Not one is respectable or unhappy over the whole earth.

So they show their relations to me and I accept them,  
They bring me tokens of myself, they evince them  
plainly in their possession.

I wonder where they get those tokens,  
Did I pass that way huge times ago and negligently  
drop them ?

Myself moving forward then and now and forever,  
Gathering and showing more always and with velocity,  
Infinite and omnigenous, and the like of these among  
them,

Not too exclusive toward the reachers of my remem-  
brancers,

Picking out here one that I love, and now go with him  
on brotherly terms.

A gigantic beauty of a stallion, fresh and responsive to  
my caresses,

Head high in the forehead, wide between the ears,  
Limbs glossy and supple, tail dusting the ground,  
Eyes full of sparkling wickedness, ears finely cut,  
flexibly moving.

His nostrils dilate as my heels embrace him,  
His well-built limbs tremble with pleasure as we race  
around and return.

I but use you a minute, then I resign you, stallion,  
Why do I need your paces when I myself out-gallop  
them ?  
Even as I stand or sit passing faster than you.

## 32

Space and Time ! now I see it is true, what I guess'd at,  
What I guess'd when I loaf'd on the grass,  
What I guess'd while I lay alone in my bed,  
And again as I walk'd the beach under the paling stars  
of the morning.

My ties and ballasts leave me, my elbows rest in sea-  
gaps,  
I skirt sierras, my palms cover continents,  
I am afoot with my vision.

By the city's quadrangular houses—in log huts, camp-  
ing with lumbermen,  
Along the ruts of the turnpike, along the dry gulch  
and rivulet bed,  
Weeding my onion-patch or hoeing rows of carrots and  
parsnips, crossing savannas, trailing in forests,  
Prospecting, gold-digging, girdling the trees of a new  
purchase,  
Scorch'd ankle-deep by the hot sand, hauling my boat  
down the shallow river,  
Where the panther walks to and fro on a limb overhead,  
where the buck turns furiously at the hunter,  
Where the rattlesnake suns his flabby length on a rock,  
where the otter is feeding on fish,  
Where the alligator in his tough pimples sleeps by the  
bayou,  
Where the black bear is searching for roots or honey,  
where the beaver pats the mud with his paddle-  
shaped tail ;  
Over the growing sugar, over the yellow-flower'd cotton  
plant, over the rice in its low moist field,  
Over the sharp-peak'd farm-house, with its scallop'd  
scum and slender shoots from the gutters,



Over the western persimmon, over the long-leav'd corn,  
    over the delicate blue-flower flax,  
Over the white and brown buckwheat, a hummer and  
    buzzer there with the rest,  
Over the dusky green of the rye as it ripples and shades  
    in the breeze ;  
Scaling mountains, pulling myself cautiously up, hold-  
    ing on by low scragged limbs,  
Walking the path worn in the grass and beat through  
    the leaves of the brush,  
Where the quail is whistling betwixt the woods and the  
    wheat-lot,  
Where the bat flies in the Seventh-month eve, where  
    the great gold-bug drops through the dark,  
Where the brook puts out of the roots of the old tree  
    and flows to the meadow,  
Where cattle stand and shake away flies with the  
    tremulous shuddering of their hides,  
Where the cheese-cloth hangs in the kitchen, where  
    andirons straddle the hearth-slab, where cobwebs  
    fall in festoons from the rafters ;  
Where trip-hammers crash, where the press is whirling  
    its cylinders,  
Wherever the human heart beats with terrible throes  
    under its ribs,  
Where the pear-shaped balloon is floating aloft, (floating  
    in it myself and looking composedly down,)  
Where the life-car is drawn on the slip-noose, where  
    the heat hatches pale-green eggs in the dented  
    sand,  
Where the she-whale swims with her calf and never  
    forsakes it,  
Where the steam-ship trails hind-ways its long pennant  
    of smoke,  
Where the fin of the shark cuts like a black chip out  
    of the water,  
Where the half-burn'd brig is riding on unknown  
    currents,  
Where shells grow to her slimy deck, where the dead  
    are corrupting below ;

Where the dense-starr'd flag is borne at the head of  
the regiments,  
Approaching Manhattan up by the long-stretching  
island,  
Under Niagara, the cataract falling like a veil over my  
countenance,  
Upon a door-step, upon the horse-block of hard wood  
outside,  
Upon the race-course, or enjoying picnics or jigs or  
a good game of base-ball,  
At he-festivals, with blackguard gibes, ironical licence,  
bull-dances, drinking, laughter,  
At the cider-mill tasting the sweets of the brown mash,  
sucking the juice through a straw,  
At apple-peelings wanting kisses for all the red fruit  
I find,  
At musters, beach-parties, friendly bees, huskings,  
house-raisings ;  
Where the mocking-bird sounds his delicious gurgles,  
cackles, screams, weeps,  
Where the hay-rick stands in the barn-yard, where the  
dry-stalks are scatter'd, where the brood-cow waits  
in the hovel,  
Where the bull advances to do his masculine work,  
where the stud to the mare, where the cock is  
treading the hen,  
Where the heifers browse, where geese nip their food  
with short jerks,  
Where sun-down shadows lengthen over the limitless  
and lonesome prairie,  
Where herds of buffalo make a crawling spread of the  
square miles far and near,  
Where the humming-bird shimmers, where the neck of  
the long-lived swan is curving and winding,  
Where the laughing-gull scoots by the shore, where she  
laughs her near-human laugh,  
Where bee-hives range on a grey bench in the garden  
half hid by the high weeds,  
Where band-neck'd partridges roost in a ring on the  
ground with their heads out,

Where burial coaches enter the arch'd gates of a  
cemetery,  
Where winter wolves bark amid wastes of snow and  
icicled trees,  
Where the yellow-crown'd heron comes to the edge of  
the marsh at night and feeds upon small crabs,  
Where the splash of swimmers and divers cools the  
warm noon,  
Where the katy-did works her chromatic reed on the  
walnut-tree over the well,  
Through patches of citrons and cucumbers with silver-  
wired leaves,  
Through the salt-lick or orange glade, or under conical  
firs,  
Through the gymnasium, through the curtain'd saloon,  
through the office or public hall ;  
Pleas'd with the native and pleas'd with the foreign,  
pleas'd with the new and old,  
Pleas'd with the homely woman as well as the hand-  
some,  
Pleas'd with the quakeress as she puts off her bonnet  
and talks melodiously,  
Pleas'd with the tune of the choir of the whitewash'd  
church,  
Pleas'd with the earnest words of the sweating Methodist  
preacher, impress'd seriously at the camp-meeting ;  
Looking in at the shop-windows of Broadway the whole  
forenoon, flattening the flesh of my nose on the thick  
plate glass,  
Wandering the same afternoon with my face turn'd up  
to the clouds, or down a lane or along the beach,  
My right and left arms round the sides of two friends,  
and I in the middle ;  
Coming home with the silent and dark-cheek'd bush-  
boy, (behind me he rides at the drape of the  
day,)  
Far from the settlements studying the print of animals'  
feet, or the moccasin print,  
By the cot in the hospital reaching lemonade to a  
feverish patient,

Nigh the coffin'd corpse when all is still, examining  
with a candle ;

Voyaging to every port to dicker and adventure,  
Hurrying with the modern crowd as eager and fickle  
as any,

Hot toward one I hate, ready in my madness to knife  
him,

Solitary at midnight in my back yard, my thoughts  
gone from me a long while,

Walking the old hills of Judæa with the beautiful gentle  
God by my side.

Speeding through space, speeding through heaven and  
the stars,

Speeding amid the seven satellites and the broad ring,  
and the diameter of eighty thousand miles,

Speeding with tail'd meteors, throwing fire-balls like  
the rest,

Carrying the crescent child that carries its own full  
mother in its belly,

Storming, enjoying, planning, loving, cautioning,

Backing and filling, appearing and disappearing,

I tread day and night such roads.

I visit the orchards of spheres and look at the product,  
And look at quintillions ripen'd and look at quintillions  
green.

I fly those flights of a fluid and swallowing soul,  
My course runs below the soundings of plummets.

I help myself to material and immaterial,  
No guard can shut me off, no law prevent me.

I anchor my ship for a little while only,  
My messengers continually cruise away or bring their  
returns to me.

I go hunting polar furs and the seal, leaping chasms  
with a pike-pointed staff, clinging to topples of  
brittle and blue.

I ascend to the foretruck.

I take my place late at night in the crow's-nest,

We sail the arctic sea, it is plenty light enough,  
Through the clear atmosphere I stretch around on the  
wonderful beauty,  
The enormous masses of ice pass me and I pass them,  
the scenery is plain in all directions,  
The white-topped mountains show in the distance, I  
fling out my fancies toward them,  
We are approaching some great battle-field in which  
we are soon to be engaged,  
We pass the colossal outposts of the encampment, we  
pass with still feet and caution,  
Or we are entering by the suburbs some vast and  
ruin'd city,  
The blocks and fallen architecture more than all the  
living cities of the globe.

I understand the large hearts of heroes,  
The courage of present times and all times,  
How the skipper saw the crowded and rudderless wreck  
of the steam-ship, and Death chasing it up and  
down the storm,  
How he knuckled tight and gave not back an inch,  
and was faithful of days and faithful of nights,  
And chalk'd in large letters on a board, *Be of good  
cheer, we will not desert you ;*  
How he follow'd with them and tack'd with them three  
days and would not give it up,  
How he saved the drifting company at last,  
How the lank loose-gown'd women look'd when boated  
from the side of their prepared graves,  
How the silent old-faced infants and the lifted sick,  
and the sharp-lipp'd unshaved men ;  
All this I swallow, it tastes good, I like it well, it  
becomes mine,  
I am the man, I suffer'd, I was there.  
The disdain and calmness of martyrs,  
The mother of old, condemn'd for a witch, burnt with  
dry wood, her children gazing on,  
The hounded slave that flags in the race, leans by the  
fence, blowing, cover'd with sweat,

The twinges that sting like needles his legs and neck,  
the murderous buckshot and the bullets,  
All these I feel or am.

I am the hounded slave, I wince at the bite of the dogs,  
Hell and despair are upon me, crack and again crack  
the marksmen,  
I clutch the rails of the fence, my gore drips, thinn'd  
with the ooze of my skin,  
I fall on the weeds and stones,  
The riders spur their unwilling horses, haul close,  
Taunt my dizzy ears and beat me violently over the  
head with whip-stocks.

Agonies are one of my changes of garments,  
I do not ask the wounded person how he feels, I myself  
become the wounded person,  
My hurts turn livid upon me as I lean on a cane and  
observe.

I am the mash'd fireman with breast-bone broken,  
Tumbling walls buried me in their débris,  
Heat and smoke I inspired, I heard the yelling shouts  
of my comrades,  
I heard the distant click of their picks and shovels,  
They have clear'd the beams away, they tenderly lift  
me forth.

I lie in the night air in my red shirt, the pervading  
hush is for my sake,  
Painless after all I lie exhausted but not so unhappy,  
White and beautiful are the faces around me, the heads  
are bared of their fire-caps,  
The kneeling crowd fades with the light of the  
torches.

Distant and dead resuscitate,  
They show as the dial or move as the hands of me,  
I am the clock myself.

I am an old artillerist, I tell of my fort's bombardment,  
I am there again.

Again the long roll of the drummers,  
Again the attacking cannon, mortars,  
Again to my listening ears the cannon responsive.

I take part, I see and hear the whole,  
The cries, curses, roar, the plaudits for well-aim'd shots,  
The ambulanza slowly passing trailing its red drip,  
Workmen searching after damages, making indispensable repairs,  
The fall of grenades through the rent roof, the fan-shaped explosion,  
The whizz of limbs, heads, stone, wood, iron, high in the air.

Again gurgles the mouth of my dying general, he  
furiously waves with his hand,  
He gasps through the clot *Mind not me—mind—the  
entrenchments.*

## 33

Now I tell what I knew in Texas in my early youth,  
(I tell not the fall of Alamo,  
Not one escaped to tell the fall of Alamo,  
The hundred and fifty are dumb yet at Alamo,)  
'Tis the tale of the murder in cold blood of four hundred  
and twelve young men.

Retreating they had form'd in a hollow square with  
their baggage for breastworks,  
Nine hundred lives out of the surrounding enemies,  
nine times their number, was the price they took  
in advance,  
Their colonel was wounded and their ammunition gone,  
They treated for an honourable capitulation, receiv'd  
writing and seal, gave up their arms and march'd  
back prisoners of war.

They were the glory of the race of rangers,  
Matchless with horse, rifle, song, supper, courtship,  
Large, turbulent, generous, handsome, proud, and  
affectionate,  
Bearded, sunburnt, drest in the free costume of hunters,  
Not a single one over thirty years of age.

The second First-day morning they were brought out  
in squads and massacred, it was beautiful early  
summer,

The work commenced about five o'clock and was over  
by eight.

None obey'd the command to kneel,  
Some made a mad and helpless rush, some stood stark  
and straight,

A few fell at once, shot in the temple or heart, the  
living and dead lay together,

The main'd and mangled dug in the dirt, the new-  
comers saw them there,

Some half-kill'd attempted to crawl away,

These were despatch'd with bayonets or batter'd with  
the blunts of muskets,

A youth not seventeen years old seiz'd his assassin till  
two more came to release him,

The three were all torn and cover'd with the boy's blood.

At eleven o'clock began the burning of the bodies ;  
That is the tale of the murder of the four hundred and  
twelve young men.

## 34

Would you hear of an old-time sea-fight ?

Would you learn who won by the light of the moon  
and stars ?

List to the yarn, as my grandmother's father the sailor  
told it to me.

Our foe was no skulk in his ship I tell you, (said he,)   
His was the surly English pluck, and there is no tougher  
or truer, and never was, and never will be ;

Along the lower'd eve he came horribly raking us.

We closed with him, the yards entangled, the cannon  
touch'd,

My captain lash'd fast with his own hands.

We had receiv'd some eighteen pound shots under the  
water,



On our lower-gun-deck two large pieces had burst at the  
first fire, killing all around and blowing up overhead.

Fighting at sun-down, fighting at dark,  
Ten o'clock at night, the full moon well up, our leaks  
on the gain, and five feet of water reported,  
The master-at-arms loosing the prisoners confined in the  
after-hold to give them a chance for themselves.

The transit to and from the magazine is now stopt by  
the sentinels,

They see so many strange faces they do not know  
whom to trust.

Our frigate takes fire,

The other asks if we demand quarter ?

If our colours are struck and the fighting done ?

Now I laugh content, for I hear the voice of my little  
captain,

*We have not struck*, he composedly cries, *we have just  
begun our part of the fighting.*

Only three guns are in use,

One is directed by the captain himself against the  
enemy's mainmast,

Two well serv'd with grape and canister silence his  
musketry and clear his decks.

The tops alone second the fire of this little battery,  
especially the main-top,

They hold out bravely during the whole of the action.

Not a moment's cease,

The leaks gain fast on the pumps, the fire eats toward  
the powder-magazine.

One of the pumps has been shot away, it is generally  
thought we are sinking.

Serene stands the little captain,

He is not hurried, his voice is neither high nor low,

His eyes give more light to us than our battle-lanterns.

Toward twelve there in the beams of the moon they  
surrender to us.

## 35

Stretch'd and still lies the midnight,  
Two great hulls motionless on the breast of the darkness,  
Our vessel riddled and slowly sinking, preparations to  
pass to the one we have conquer'd,  
The captain on the quarter-deck coldly giving his orders  
through a countenance white as a sheet,  
Near by the corpse of the child that serv'd in the cabin,  
The dead face of an old salt with long white hair and  
carefully curl'd whiskers,  
The flames spite of all that can be done flickering aloft  
and below,  
The husky voices of the two or three officers yet fit for  
duty,  
Formless stacks of bodies and bodies by themselves,  
dabs of flesh upon the masts and spars,  
Cut of cordage, dangle of rigging, slight shock of the  
soothe of waves,  
Black and impassive guns, litter of powder-parcels,  
strong scent,  
A few large stars overhead, silent and mournful shining,  
Delicate sniffs of sea-breeze, smells of sedgy grass and  
fields by the shore, death-messages given in charge  
to survivors,  
The hiss of the surgeon's knife, the gnawing teeth of  
his saw,  
Wheeze, cluck, swash of falling blood, short wild scream,  
and long, dull, tapering groan,  
These so, these irretrievable.

## 36

You laggards there on guard ! look to your arms !  
In at the conquer'd doors they crowd ! I am possess'd !  
Embody all presences outlaw'd or suffering,  
See myself in prison shaped like another man,  
And feel the dull unintermitted pain.  
For me the keepers of convicts shoulder their carbines  
and keep watch,  
It is I let out in the morning and barr'd at night.

Not a mutineer walks handcuff'd to jail but I am  
handcuff'd to him and walk by his side,  
(I am less the jolly one there, and more the silent one  
with sweat on my twitching lips.)

Not a youngster is taken for larceny but I go up too,  
and am tried and sentenced.

Not a cholera patient lies at the last gasp but I also  
lie at the last gasp,  
My face is ash-colour'd, my sinews gnarl, away from  
me people retreat.

Askers embody themselves in me and I am embodied  
in them,  
I project my hat, sit shame-faced, and beg.

## 37

Enough ! enough ! enough !  
Somehow I have been stunn'd. Stand back !  
Give me a little time beyond my cuff'd head, slumbers,  
dreams, gaping,

I discover myself on the verge of a usual mistake.

That I could forget the mockers and insults !  
That I could forget the trickling tears and the blows  
of the bludgeons and hammers !  
That I could look with a separate look on my own  
crucifixion and bloody crowning.

I remember now,  
I resume the overstaid fraction,  
The grave of rock multiplies what has been confided  
to it, or to any graves,

Corpses rise, gashes heal, fastenings roll from me.

I troop forth replenish'd with supreme power, one of  
an average unending procession,  
Inland and sea-coast we go, and pass all boundary lines,  
Our swift ordinances on their way over the whole earth,  
The blossoms we wear in our hats the growth of  
thousands of years.

Eleves, I salute you ! come forward !  
Continue your annotations, continue your questionings.

## 38

The friendly and flowing savage, who is he ?  
Is he waiting for civilization, or past it and mastering  
it ?

Is he some Southwesterner rais'd out-doors ? is he  
Kanadian ?

Is he from the Mississippi country ? Iowa, Oregon,  
California ?

The mountains ? prairie-life, bush-life ? or sailor from  
the sea ?

Wherever he goes men and women accept and desire  
him,

They desire he should like them, touch them, speak to  
them, stay with them.

Behaviour lawless as snow-flakes, words simple as grass,  
uncomb'd head, laughter, and naïveté.

Slow-stepping feet, common features, common modes  
and emanations,

They descend in new forms from the tips of his fingers,  
They are wafted with the odour of his body or breath,  
they fly out of the glance of his eyes.

## 39

Flaunt of the sunshine I need not your bask—lie over !  
You light surfaces only, I force surfaces and depths also.

Earth ! you seem to look for something at my hands,  
Say, old top-knot, what do you want ?

Man or woman, I might tell how I like you, but cannot,  
And might tell what it is in me and what it is in you,  
but cannot,

And might tell that pining I have, that pulse of my  
nights and days.

Behold, I do not give lectures or a little charity,  
When I give I give myself.

You there, impotent, loose in the knees,  
Open your scarf'd chops till I blow grit within you,  
Spread your palms and lift the flaps of your pockets,

I am not to be denied, I compel, I have stores plenty  
and to spare,  
And any thing I have I bestow.

I do not ask who you are, that is not important to me,  
You can do nothing and be nothing but what I will  
infolcl you.

To cotton-field drudge or cleaner of privies I lean,  
On his right cheek I put the family kiss,  
And in my soul I swear I never will deny him.

To any one dying, thither I speed and twist the knob  
of the door,

Turn the bed-clothes toward the foot of the bed,  
Let the physician and the priest go home.

I seize the descending man and raise him with resistless  
will,

O despairer, here is my neck,

By God, you shall not go down ! hang your whole  
weight upon me.

I dilate you with tremendous breath, I buoy you up,  
Every room of the house do I fill with an arm'd force,  
Lovers of me, bafflers of graves.

Sleep—I and they keep guard all night,

Not doubt, not decease shall dare to lay finger upon you,  
I have embraced you, and henceforth possess you to  
myself,

And when you rise in the morning you will find what  
I tell you is so.

## 40

I am he bringing help for the sick as they pant on  
their backs,

And for strong upright men I bring yet more needed  
help.

I heard what was said of the universe,  
Heard it and heard it of several thousand years ;  
It is middling well as far as it goes—but is that all ?

Magnifying and applying come I,  
Outbidding at the start the old cautious hucksters,

Taking myself the exact dimensions of Jehovah,  
Lithographing Kronos, Zeus his son, and Hercules his  
grandson,  
Buying drafts of Osiris, Isis, Belus, Brahma, Buddha;  
In my portfolio placing Manito loose, Allah on a leaf,  
the crucifix engraved,  
With Odin and the hideous-faced Mexitli and every  
idol and image,  
Taking them all for what they are worth and not  
a cent more,  
Admitting they were alive and did the work of their  
days,  
(They bore mites as for unfledg'd birds who have now  
to rise and fly and sing for themselves,)  
Accepting the rough deific sketches to fill out better in  
myself, bestowing them freely on each man and  
woman I see,  
Discovering as much or more in a framer framing  
a house,  
Putting higher claims for him there with his roll'd-up  
sleeves driving the mallet and chisel,  
Not objecting to special revelations, considering a curl  
of smoke or a hair on the back of my hand just  
as curious as any revelation,  
Lads ahold of fire-engines and hook-and-ladder ropes  
no less to me than the gods of the antique wars,  
Minding their voices peal through the crash of destruc-  
tion,  
Their brawny limbs passing safe over charr'd laths,  
their white foreheads whole and unhurt out of the  
flames ;  
By the mechanic's wife with her babe at her nipple  
interceding for every person born,  
Three scythes at harvest whizzing in a row from three  
lusty angels with shirts bagg'd out at their waists,  
The snag-tooth'd hostler with red hair redeeming sins  
past and to come,  
Selling all he possesses, travelling on foot to fee lawyers  
for his brother and sit by him while he is tried for  
forgery ;

What was strewn in the amplest strewing the square  
 'rod about me, and not filling the square rod then,  
 The bull and the bug never worshipp'd half enough,  
 Dung and dirt more admirable than was dream'd,  
 The supernatural of no account, myself waiting my  
 time to be one of the supremes,  
 The day getting ready for me when I shall do as much  
 good as the best, and be as prodigious ;  
 By my life-lumps ! becoming already a creator,  
 Putting myself here and now to the ambush'd womb  
 of the shadows.

## 41

A call in the midst of the crowd,  
 My own voice, rotund sweeping and final.  
 Come my children,  
 Come my boys and girls, my women, household and  
 intimates,  
 Now the performer launches his nerve, he has pass'd  
 his prelude on the reeds within.

This is the city and I am one of the citizens,  
 Whatever interests the rest interests me, politics, wars,  
 markets, newspapers, schools,  
 The mayor and councils, banks, tariffs, steamships,  
 factories, stocks, stores, real estate and personal  
 estate.

The little plentiful manikins skipping around in collars  
 and tail'd coats,  
 I am aware who they are, (they are positively not  
 worms or fleas,)  
 I acknowledge the duplicates of myself, the weakest  
 and shallowest is deathless with me,  
 What I do and say the same waits for them,  
 Every thought that flounders in me the same flounders  
 in them.

I know perfectly well my own egotism,  
 Know my omnivorous lines and must not write any less,  
 And would fetch you whoever you are flush with myself.

Not words of routine this song of mine,  
But abruptly to question, to leap beyond yet nearer  
bring ;  
This printed and bound book—but the printer and the  
printing-office boy ?  
The well-taken photographs—but your wife or friend  
close and solid in your arms ?  
The black ship mail'd with iron, her mighty guns in  
her turrets—but the pluck of the captain and  
engineers ?  
In the houses the dishes and fare and furniture—but  
the host and hostess, and the look out of their  
eyes ?  
The sky up there—yet here or next door, or across the  
way ?  
The saints and sages in history—but you yourself ?  
Sermons, creeds, theology—but the fathomless human  
brain,  
And what is reason ? and what is love ? and what is  
life ?

## 42

I do not despise you priests, all time, the world over,  
My faith is the greatest of faiths and the least of faiths,  
Enclosing worship ancient and modern and all between  
ancient and modern,  
Believing I shall come again upon the earth after five  
thousand years,  
Waiting responses from oracles, honouring the gods,  
saluting the sun,  
Making a fetich of the first rock or stump, powowing  
with sticks in the circle of obis,  
Helping the llama or brahmin as he trims the lamps of  
the idols,  
Dancing yet through the streets in a phallic procession,  
rapt and austere in the woods a gymnosophist,  
Drinking mead from the skull-cup, to Shastas and  
Vedas admirant, minding the Korap,  
Walking the teokallis, spotted with gore from the stone  
and knife, beating the serpent-skin drum,



Accepting the Gospels, accepting him that was crucified,  
knowing assuredly that he is divine,  
To the mass kneeling or the puritan's prayer rising, or  
sitting patiently in a pew,  
Ranting and frothing in my insane crisis, or waiting  
dead-like till my spirit arouses me,  
Looking forth on pavement and land, or outside of  
pavement and land,  
Belonging to the winders of the circuit of circuits.  
One of that centripetal and centrifugal gang I turn and  
talk like a man leaving charges before a journey.  
Down-hearted doubters dull and excluded,  
Frivolous, sullen, moping, angry, affected, dishearten'd,  
atheistical,  
I know every one of you, I know the sea of torment,  
doubt, despair and unbelief.  
I do not know what is untried and afterward,  
But I know it will in its turn prove sufficient, and  
cannot fail.  
Each who passes is consider'd, each who stops is con-  
sider'd, not a single one can it fail.  
It cannot fail the young man who died and was buried,  
Nor the young woman who died and was put by his side,  
Nor the little child that peep'd in at the door, and then  
drew back and was never seen again,  
Nor the old man who has lived without purpose, and  
feels it with bitterness worse than gall,  
Nor him in the poor house tubercled by rum and the  
bad disorder,  
Nor the numberless slaughter'd and wreck'd, nor the  
brutish koboo call'd the ordure of humanity,  
Nor the sacs merely floating with open mouths for food  
to slip in,  
Nor any thing in the earth, or down in the oldest graves  
of the earth,  
Nor any thing in the myriads of spheres, nor the myriads  
of myriads that inhabit them,  
Nor the present, nor the least wisp that is known.

## 43

It is time to explain myself—let us stand up.

What is known I strip away,  
I launch all men and women forward with me into the  
Unknown.

The clock indicates the moment—but what does eternity indicate ?

We have thus far exhausted trillions of winters and  
summers,

There are trillions ahead, and trillions ahead of them.

Births have brought us richness and variety,  
And other births will bring us richness and variety.

I do not call one greater and one smaller,  
That which fills its period and place is equal to any.

Were mankind murderous or jealous upon you, my  
brother, my sister ?

I am sorry for you, they are not murderous or jealous  
upon me,

All has been gentle with me, I keep no account with  
lamentation,

(What have I to do with lamentation ?)

I am an acme of things accomplish'd, and I an encloser  
of things to be.

My feet strike an apex of the apices of the stairs,  
On every step bunches of ages, and larger bunches  
between the steps,

All below duly travell'd, and still I mount and mount.

Rise after rise bow the phantoms behind me,  
Afar down I see the huge first Nothing, I know I was  
even there,

I waited unseen and always, and slept through the  
lethargic mist,

And took my time, and took no hurt from the fetid  
carbon.

Long I was hugg'd close—long and long.

Immense have been the preparations for me,  
Faithful and friendly the arms that have help'd me.  
Cycles ferried my cradle, rowing and rowing like cheerful  
boatmen,  
For room to me stars kept aside in their own rings,  
They sent influences to look after what was to hold me.  
Before I was born out of my mother generations guided  
me,  
My embryo has never been torpid, nothing could overlay  
it.  
For it the nebula cohered to an orb,  
The long slow strata piled to rest it on,  
Vast vegetables gave it sustenance,  
Monstrous sauroids transported it in their mouths and  
deposited it with care.  
All forces have been steadily employ'd to complete and  
delight me,  
Now on this spot I stand with my robust soul.

## 44

O span of youth ! ever-push'd elasticity !  
O manhood, balanced, florid and full.  
My lovers suffocate me,  
Crowding my lips, thick in the pores of my skin,  
Jostling me through streets and public halls, coming  
naked to me at night,  
Crying by day *Ahoy !* from the rocks of the river,  
swinging and chirping over my head,  
Calling my name from flower-beds, vines, tangled  
underbrush,  
Lighting on every moment of my life,  
Bussing my body with soft balsamic busses,  
Noiselessly passing handfuls out of their hearts and  
giving them to be mine.  
Old age superbly rising ! O welcome, ineffable grace  
of dying days !

Every condition promulges not only itself, it promulges  
what grows after and out of itself,  
And the dark hush promulges as much as any.

I open my scuttle at night and see the far-sprinkled  
systems,  
And all I see multiplied as high as I can cipher edge  
but the rim of the farther systems.

Wider and wider they spread, expanding, always  
expanding,  
Outward and outward and forever outward.

My sun has his sun and round him obediently wheels,  
He joins with his partners a group of superior circuit,  
And greater sets follow, making specks of the greatest  
inside them.

There is no stoppage and never can be stoppage,  
If I, you, and the worlds, and all beneath or upon their  
surfaces, were this moment reduced back to a pallid  
float, it would not avail in the long run,  
We should surely bring up again where we now stand,  
And surely go as much farther, and then farther and  
farther.

A few quadrillions of eras, a few octillions of cubic  
leagues, do not hazard the span or make it im-  
patient,

They are but parts, any thing is but a part.

See ever so far, there is limitless space outside of that,  
Count ever so much, there is limitless time around that.

My rendezvous is appointed, it is certain,  
The Lord will be there and wait till I come on perfect  
terms,

The great Camerado, the lover true for whom I pine  
will be there.

## 45

I know I have the best of time and space, and was never  
measured and never will be measured.

I tramp a perpetual journey, (come listen all !)

My signs are a rainproof coat, good shoes, and a staff  
cut from the woods,  
No friend of mine takes his ease in my chair,  
I have no chair, no church, no philosophy,  
I lead no man to a dinner-table, library, exchange,  
But each man and each woman of you I lead upon  
a knoll,  
My left hand hooking you round the waist,  
My right hand pointing to landscapes of continents and  
the public road.

Not I, not any one else can travel that road for you,  
You must travel it for yourself.

It is not far, it is within reach,  
Perhaps you have been on it since you were born and  
did not know,  
Perhaps it is everywhere on water and on land.

Shoulder your duds dear son, and I will mine, and let  
us hasten forth,  
Wonderful cities and free nations we shall fetch as we  
go.

If you tire, give me both burdens, and rest the chuff of  
your hand on my hip,  
And in due time you shall repay the same service to me,  
For after we start we never lie by again.

This day before dawn I ascended a hill and look'd at  
the crowded heaven,  
And I said to my spirit *When we become the enfolders  
of those orbs, and the pleasure and knowledge of every  
thing in them, shall we be fill'd and satisfied then?*  
And my spirit said *No, we but level that lift to pass and  
continue beyond.*

You are also asking me questions and I hear you,  
I answer that I cannot answer, you must find out for  
yourself.

Sit a while dear son,  
Here are hiscuits to eat and here is milk to drink,

But as soon as you sleep and renew yourself in sweet  
clothes, I kiss you with a good-bye kiss and open  
the gate for your egress hence.

Long enough have you dream'd contemptible dreams,  
Now I wash the gum from your eyes,  
You must habit yourself to the dazzle of the light and  
of every moment of your life.

Long have you timidly waded holding a plank by the  
shore,  
Now I will you to be a bold swimmer,  
To jump off in the midst of the sea, rise again, nod to  
me, shout, and laughingly dash with your hair.

## 46

I am the teacher of athletes,  
He that by me spreads a wider breast than my own  
proves the width of my own,  
He most honours my style who learns under it to destroy  
the teacher.

The boy I love, the same becomes a man not through  
derived power, but in his own right,  
Wicked rather than virtuous out of conformity or fear,  
Fond of his sweetheart, relishing well his steak,  
Unrequited love or a slight cutting him worse than  
sharp steel cuts,

First-rate to ride, to fight, to hit the bull's-eye, to sail  
a skiff, to sing a song or play on the banjo,  
Preferring scars and the beard and faces pitted with  
small-pox over all latherers,  
And those well-tann'd to those that keep out of the sun.

I teach straying from me, yet who can stray from me ?  
I follow you whoever you are from the present hour,  
My words itch at your ears till you understand them.

I do not say these things for a dollar or to fill up the  
time while I wait for a boat,  
(It is you talking just as much as myself, I act as the  
tongue of you,  
Tied in your mouth, in mine it begins to be loosen'd.)

I swear I will never again mention love or death inside  
a house,

And I swear I will never translate myself at all, only  
to him or her who privately stays with me in the  
open air.

If you would understand me go to the heights or water-  
shore,

The nearest gnat is an explanation, and a drop or motion  
of waves a key,

The maul, the oar, the hand-saw, second my words.

No shutter'd room or school can commune with me,  
But roughs and little children better than they.

The young mechanic is closest to me, he knows me well,  
The woodman that takes his axe and jug with him shall  
take me with him all day,

The farm-boy ploughing in the field feels good at the  
sound of my voice,

In vessels that sail my words sail, I go with fishermen  
and seamen and love them.

The soldier camp'd or upon the march is mine,

On the night ere the pending battle many seek me, and  
I do not fail them,

On that solemn night (it may be their last) those that  
know me seek me.

My face rubs to the hunter's face when he lies down  
alone in his blanket,

The driver thinking of me does not mind the jolt of  
his wagon,

The young mother and old mother comprehend me,

The girl and the wife rest the needle a moment and  
forget where they are,

They and all would resume what I have told them.

I have said that the soul is not more than the body,  
And I have said that the body is not more than the soul,  
And nothing, not God, is greater to one than one's  
self is,

And whoever walks a furlong without sympathy walks  
to his own funeral drest in his shroud,  
And I or you pocketless of a dime may purchase the  
pick of the earth,  
And to glance with an eye or show a bean in its pod  
confounds the learning of all times,  
And there is no trade or employment but the young  
man following it may become a hero,  
And there is no object so soft but it makes a hub for  
the wheel'd universe,  
And I say to any man or woman, Let your soul stand  
cool and composed before a million universes.  
And I say to mankind, Be not curious about God,  
For I who am curious about each am not curious about  
God,  
(No array of terms can say how much I am at peace  
about God and about death.)  
I hear and behold God in every object, yet understand  
God not in the least,  
Nor do I understand who there can be more wonderful  
than myself.  
Why should I wish to see God better than this day ?  
I see something of God each hour of the twenty-four,  
and each moment then,  
In the faces of men and women I see God, and in my own  
face in the glass,  
I find letters from God dropt in the street, and every  
one is sign'd by God's name,  
And I leave them where they are, for I know that  
wheresoe'er I go,  
Others will punctually come for ever and ever.

And as to you Death, and you bitter hug of mortality,  
it is idle to try to alarm me.  
To his work without finching the accoucheur comes,  
I see the elder-hand pressing receiving supporting,  
I recline by the sills of the exquisite flexible doors,  
And mark the outlet, and mark the relief and escape.



And as to you Corpse I think you are good manure, but  
that does not offend me,  
I smell the white roses sweet-scented and growing,  
I reach to the leafy lips, I reach to the polish'd breasts  
of melons.

And as to you Life I reckon you are the leavings of  
many deaths,  
(No doubt I have died myself ten thousand times be-  
fore.)

I hear you whispering there O stars of heaven,  
O suns—O grass of graves—O perpetual transfers and  
promotions,  
If you do not say any thing how can I say any thing ?  
Of the turbid pool that lies in the autumn forest,  
Of the moon that descends the steeps of the soughing  
twilight,  
Toss, sparkles of day and dusk—toss on the black  
stems that decay in the muck,  
Toss to the moaning gibberish of the dry limbs.  
I ascend from the moon, I ascend from the night,  
I perceive that the ghastly glimmer is noonday sun-  
beams reflected,  
And debouch to the steady and central from the off-  
spring great or small.

## 49

There is that in me—I do not know what it is—but  
I know it is in me.  
Wrench'd and sweaty—calm and cool then my body  
becomes,  
I sleep—I sleep long.  
I do not know it—it is without name—it is a word  
unsaid,  
It is not in any dictionary, utterance, symbol.  
Something it swings on more than the earth I swing on,  
To it the creation is the friend whose embracing awakes  
me.

Perhaps I might tell more. Outlines ! I plead for my  
brothers and sisters.

Do you see O my brothers and sisters ?  
It is not chaos or death—it is form, union, plan—it is  
eternal life—it is Happiness.

## 50

The past and present wilt—I have fill'd them, emptied  
them,  
And proceed to fill my next fold of the future.

Listener up there ! what have you to confide to me ?  
Look in my face while I snuff the sidle of evening,  
(Talk honestly, no one else hears you, and I stay only  
a minute longer.)

Do I contradict myself ?  
Very well then I contradict myself,  
(I am large, I contain multitudes.)

I concentrate toward them that are nigh, I wait on the  
door-slab.

Who has done his day's work ? who will soonest be  
through with his supper ?  
Who wishes to walk with me ?

Will you speak before I am gone ? will you prove  
already too late ?

## 51

The spotted hawk swoops by and accuses me, he com-  
plains of my gab and my loitering.

I too am not a bit tamed, I too am untranslatable,  
I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the  
world.

The last scud of day holds back for me,  
It flings my likeness after the rest and true as any on  
the shadow'd wilds,  
It coaxes me to the vapour and the dusk.

I depart as air, I shake my white locks at the runaway  
sun,

I effuse my flesh in eddies, and drift it in lacy jags.

I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass  
I love,

If you want me again look for me under your boot-  
soles.

You will hardly know who I am or what I mean,  
But I shall be good health to you nevertheless,  
And filter and fibre your blood.

Failing to fetch me at first keep encouraged,  
Missing me one place search another,  
I stop somewhere waiting for you.

# CHILDREN OF ADAM

## TO THE GARDEN THE WORLD

To the garden the world anew ascending,  
Potent mates, daughters, sons, preluding,  
The love, the life of their bodies, meaning and being,  
Curious here behold my resurrection after slumber,  
The revolving cycles in their wide sweep having brought  
me again,  
Amorous, mature, all beautiful to me, all wondrous,  
My limbs and the quivering fire that ever plays through  
them, for reasons, most wondrous,  
Existing I peer and penetrate still,  
Content with the present, content with the past,  
By my side or back of me Eve following,  
Or in front, and I following her just the same.

## I SING THE BODY ELECTRIC

### 1

I SING the body electric,  
The armies of those I love engirth me and I engirth  
them,  
They will not let me off till I go with them, respond to  
them,  
And disconcert them, and charge them full with the  
charge of the soul.

Was it doubted that those who corrupt their own  
bodies conceal themselves ?  
And if those who defile the living are as bad as they  
who defile the dead ?  
And if the body does not do fully as much as the  
soul ?  
And if the body were not the soul, what is the soul ?

## 2

The love of the body of man or woman balks account,  
the body itself balks account,  
That of the male is perfect, and that of the female is  
perfect.

The expression of the face balks account,  
But the expression of a well-made man appears not  
only in his face,  
It is in his limbs and joints also, it is curiously in the  
joints of his hips and wrists,  
It is in his walk, the carriage of his neck, the flex of his  
waist and knees, dress does not hide him,  
The strong sweet quality he has strikes through the  
cotton and broadcloth,  
To see him pass conveys as much as the best poem,  
perhaps more,  
You linger to see his back, and the back of his neck and  
shoulder-side.

The sprawl and fullness of babes, the bosoms and heads  
of women, the folds of their dress, their style as  
we pass in the street, the contour of their shape  
downwards,  
The swimmer naked in the swimming-bath, seen as he  
swims through the transparent green-shine, or lies  
with his face up and rolls silently to and fro in the  
heave of the water,  
The bending forward and backward of rowers in row-  
boats, the horseman in his saddle,  
Girls, mothers, house-keepers, in all their performances,  
The group of labourers seated at noon-time with their  
open dinner-kettles, and their wives waiting,  
The female soothing a child, the farmer's daughter in  
the garden or cow-yard,  
The young fellow hoeing corn, the sleigh-driver driving  
his six horses through the crowd,  
The wrestle of wrestlers, two apprentice-boys, quite  
grown, lusty, good-natured, native-born, out on  
the vacant lot at sundown after work,

The coats and caps thrown down, the embrace of love  
and resistance,  
The upper-hold and under-hold, the hair rumpled over  
and blinding the eyes ;  
The march of firemen in their own costumes, the play  
of masculine muscle through clean-setting trowsers  
and waist-straps,  
The slow return from the fire, the pause when the bell  
strikes suddenly again, and the listening on the alert,  
The natural, perfect, varied attitudes, the bent head,  
the curv'd neck and the counting ;  
Such-like I love—I loosen myself, pass freely, am at the  
mother's breast with the little child,  
Swim with the swimmers, wrestle with wrestlers, march  
in line with the firemen, and pause, listen, count.

## 3

I knew a man, a common farmer, the father of five sons,  
And in them the fathers of sons, and in them the fathers  
of sons.

This man was of wonderful vigour, calmness, beauty of  
person,

The shape of his head, the pale yellow and white of his  
hair and beard, the immeasurable meaning of his  
black eyes, the richness and breadth of his manners,

These I used to go and visit him to see, he was wise also,  
He was six feet tall, he was over eighty years old, his  
sons were massive, clean, bearded, tan-faced, hand-  
some,

They and his daughters loved him, all who saw him  
loved him,

They did not love him by allowance, they loved him  
with personal love,

He drank water only, the blood show'd like scarlet  
through the clear-brown skin of his face,

He was a frequent gunner and fisher, he sail'd his boat  
himself, he had a fine one presented to him by  
a ship-joiner, he had fowling-pieces presented to  
him by men that loved him,

When he went with his five sons and many grandsons  
to hunt or fish, you would pick him out as the most  
beautiful and vigorous of the gang,  
You would wish long and long to be with him, you  
would wish to sit by him in the boat that you and  
he might touch each other.

## 4

I have perceiv'd that to be with those I like is enough,  
To stop in company with the rest at evening is enough,  
To be surrounded by beautiful, curious, breathing,  
laughing flesh is enough,  
To pass among them or touch any one, or rest my arm  
ever so lightly round his or her neck for a moment,  
what is this then ?  
I do not ask any more delight, I swim in it as in a sea.  
There is something in staying close to men and women  
and looking on them, and in the contact and odour  
of them, that pleases the soul well,  
All things please the soul, but these please the soul well.

## 5

This is the female form,  
A divine nimbus exhales from it from head to foot,  
It attracts with fierce undeniable attraction,  
I am drawn by its breath as if I were no more than  
a helpless vapour, all falls aside but myself and it,  
Books, art, religion, time, the visible and solid earth,  
and what was expected of heaven or fear'd of hell,  
are now consumed.  
Be not ashamed women, your privilege encloses the  
rest, and is the exit of the rest,  
You are the gates of the body, and you are the gates of  
the soul.  
The female contains all qualities and tempers them,  
She is in her place and moves with perfect balance,  
She is all things duly veil'd, she is both passive and  
active,  
She is to conceive daughters as well as sons, and sons  
as well as daughters.

As I see my soul reflected in Nature,  
As I see through a mist, One with inexpressible completeness, sanity, beauty,  
See the bent head and arms folded over the breast, the  
Female I see.

## 6

The male is not less the soul nor more, he too is in his place,

He too is all qualities, he is action and power,  
The flush of the known universe is in him,  
Scorn becomes him well, and appetite and defiance  
become him well,

The wildest largest passions, bliss that is utmost, sorrow  
that is utmost become him well, pride is for him,  
The full-spread pride of man is calming and excellent  
to the soul,

Knowledge becomes him, he likes it always, he brings  
every thing to the test of himself,

Whatever the survey, whatever the sea and the sail  
he strikes soundings at last only here,  
(Where else doth he strike soundings except here ?)

The man's body is sacred and the woman's body is  
sacred,

No matter who it is, it is sacred—is it the meanest one  
in the labourers' gang ?

Is it one of the dull-faced immigrants just landed on the  
wharf ?

Each belongs here or anywhere just as much as the well-  
off, just as much as you,

Each has his or her place in the procession.

(All is a procession,

The universe is a procession with measured and perfect  
motion.)

Do you know so much yourself that you call the meanest  
ignorant ?

Do you suppose you have a right to a good sight, and  
he or she has no right to a sight ?



Do you think matter has cohered together from its  
diffuse float, and the soil is on the surface, and  
water runs and vegetation sprouts,  
For you only, and not for him and her ?

## 7

A man's body at auction,  
(For before the war I often go to the slave-mart and  
watch the sale,)  
I help the auctioneer, the sloven does not half know his  
business.

Gentlemen look on this wonder,  
Whatever the bids of the bidders they cannot be high  
enough for it,  
For it the globe lay preparing quintillions of years  
without one animal or plant,  
For it the revolving cycles truly and steadily roll'd.

In this head the all-baffling brain,  
In it and below it the makings of heroes.

Examine these limbs, red, black, or white, they are  
cunning in tendon and nerve,  
They shall be stript that you may see them.

Exquisite senses, life-lit eyes, pluck, volition,  
Flakes of breast-muscle, pliant backbone and neck,  
flesh not flabby, good-sized arms and legs,  
And wonders within there yet.

Within there runs blood,  
The same old blood ! the same red-running blood !  
There swells and jets a heart, there all passions, desires,  
reachings, aspirations,  
(Do you think they are not there because they are not  
express'd in parlours and lecture-rooms ?)

This is not only one man, this the father of those who  
shall be fathers in their turns,  
In him the start of populous states and rich republics,  
Of him countless immortal lives with countless embodi-  
ments and enjoyments.

How do you know who shall come from the offspring  
of his offspring through the centuries ?  
(Who might you find you have come from yourself, if  
you could trace back through the centuries ?)

## 8

A woman's body at auction,  
She too is not only herself, she is the teeming mother of  
mothers,  
She is the bearer of them that shall grow and be mates  
to the mothers.

Have you ever loved the body of a woman ?  
Have you ever loved the body of a man ?  
Do you not see that these are exactly the same to all  
in all nations and times all over the earth ?

If any thing is sacred the human body is sacred,  
And the glory and sweet of a man is the token of man-  
hood untainted,  
And in man or woman a clean, strong, firm-fibred  
body is more beautiful than the most beautiful  
face.

Have you seen the fool that corrupted his own live  
body ? or the fool that corrupted her own live  
body ?  
For they do not conceal themselves, and cannot conceal  
themselves.

Who degrades or defiles the living body is cursed,  
Who degrades or defiles the body of the dead is not more  
cursed.

## ONE HOUR TO MADNESS AND JOY

ONE hour to madness and joy ! O furious ! O confine  
me not !  
(What is this that frees me so in storms ?  
What do my shouts amid lightnings and raging winds  
mean ?)

86      ONE HOUR TO MADNESS AND JOY

O to drink the mystic deliria deeper than any other  
man !

O savage and tender achings ! (I bequeath them to  
you my children,

I tell them to you, for reasons, O bridegroom and  
bride.)

O to be yielded to you whoever you are, and you to be  
yielded to me in defiance of the world !

O to return to Paradise ! O bashful and feminine !

O to draw you to me, to plant on you for the first time  
the lips of a determin'd man.

O the puzzle, the thrice-tied knot, the deep and dark  
pool, all untied and illumin'd !

O to speed where there is space enough and air enough  
at last !

To be absolv'd from previous ties and conventions, I  
from mine and you from yours !

To find a new unthought-of nonchalance with the best  
of Nature !

To have the gag remov'd from one's mouth !

To have the feeling to-day or any day I am sufficient  
as I am.

O something unprov'd ! something in a trance !

To escape utterly from others' anchors and holds !

To drive free ! to love free ! to dash reckless and  
dangerous !

To court destruction with taunts, with invitations !

To ascend, to leap to the heavens of the love indicated  
to me !

To rise thither with my inebriate soul !

To be lost if it must be so !

To feed the remainder of life with one hour of fullness  
and freedom !

With one brief hour of madness and joy.

## OUT OF THE ROLLING OCEAN THE CROWD

OUT of the rolling ocean the crowd came a drop gently  
to me,

Whispering *I love you, before long I die,*  
*I have travell'd a long way merely to look on you to touch*  
*you,*

*For I could not die till I once look'd on you,*

*For I fear'd I might afterward lose you.*

Now we have met, we have look'd, we are safe,

Return in peace to the ocean my love,

I too am part of that ocean my love, we are not so much  
separated,

Behold the great rondure, the cohesion of all, how  
perfect !

But as for me, for you, the irresistible sea is to separate  
us,

As for an hour carrying us diverse, yet cannot carry us  
diverse forever ;

Be not impatient—a little space—know you I salute  
the air, the ocean and the land,

Every day at sundown for your dear sake my love.

## WE TWO, HOW LONG WE WERE FOOL'D

WE two, how long we were fool'd,

Now transmuted, we swiftly escape as Nature escapes,

We are Nature, long have we been absent, but now we  
return,

We become plants, trunks, foliage, roots, bark,

We are bedded in the ground, we are rocks, ~

We are oaks, we grow in the openings side by side,

We browse, we are two among the wild herds spon-  
taneous as any,

We are two fishes swimming in the sea together,

We are what locust blossoms are, we drop scent around  
lanes mornings and evenings,

We are also the coarse smut of beasts, vegetables,  
minerals,

We are two predatory hawks, we soar above and look  
down,

## 88 WE TWO, HOW LONG WE WERE FOOL'D

We are two resplendent suns, we it is who balance ourselves orbic and stellar, we are as two comets,  
We prowl fang'd and four-footed in the woods, we spring on prey,  
We are two clouds forenoons and afternoons driving overhead,  
We are seas mingling, we are two of those cheerful waves rolling over each other and interwetting each other,  
We are what the atmosphere is, transparent, receptive, pervious, impervious,  
We are snow, rain, cold, darkness, we are each product and influence of the globe,  
We have circled and circled till we have arrived home again, we two,  
We have voided all but freedom and all but our own joy.

## I AM HE THAT ACHES WITH LOVE

I AM he that aches with amorous love ;  
Does the earth gravitate ? does not all matter, aching,  
attract all matter ?  
So the body of me to all I meet or know.

## NATIVE MOMENTS

NATIVE moments—when you come upon me—ah you are here now,  
Give me now libidinous joys only,  
Give me the drench of my passions, give me life coarse and rank,  
To-day I go consort with Nature's darlings, to-night too,  
I am for those who believe in loose delights, I share the midnight orgies of young men,  
I dance with the dancers and drink with the drinkers,  
The echoes ring with our indecent calls, I pick out some low person for my dearest friend,

He shall be lawless, rude, illiterate, he shall be one condemn'd by others for deeds done,  
I will play a part no longer, why should I exile myself  
from my companions ?  
O you shunn'd persons, I at least do not shun you,  
I come forthwith in your midst, I will be your poet,  
I will be more to you than to any of the rest.

### ONCE I PASS'D THROUGH A POPULOUS CITY

ONCE I pass'd through a populous city imprinting my  
brain for future use with its shows, architecture,  
customs, traditions,  
Yet now of all that city I remember only a woman I  
casually met there who detain'd me for love of me,  
Day by day and night by night we were together—all  
else has long been forgotten by me,  
I remember I say only that woman who passionately  
clung to me,  
Again we wander, we love, we separate again,  
Again she holds me by the hand, I must not go,  
I see her close beside me with silent lips sad and  
tremulous.

### I HEARD YOU SOLEMN-SWEET PIPES OF THE ORGAN

I HEARD you solemn-sweet pipes of the organ as last  
Sunday morn I pass'd the church,  
Winds of autumn, as I walk'd the woods at dusk I heard  
your long-stretch'd sighs up above so mournful,  
I heard the perfect Italian tenor singing at the opera,  
I heard the soprano in the midst of the quartet  
singing ;  
Heart of my love ! you too I heard murmuring low  
through one of the wrists around my head,  
Heard the pulse of you when all was still ringing little  
bells last night under my ear.

## FACING WEST FROM CALIFORNIA'S SHORES

FACING west from California's shores,  
 Inquiring, tireless, seeking what is yet unfound,  
 I, a child, very old, over waves, towards the house of  
 maternity, the land of migrations, look afar,  
 Look off the shores of my Western sea, the circle almost  
 circled ;  
 For starting westward from Hindustan, from the vales  
 of Kashmere,  
 From Asia, from the north, from the God, the sage, and  
 the hero,  
 From the south, from the flowery peninsulas and the  
 spice islands,  
 Long having wander'd since, round the earth having  
 wander'd,  
 Now I face home again, very pleas'd and joyous,  
 (But where is what I started for so long ago ?  
 And why is it yet unfound ?)

## AS ADAM EARLY IN THE MORNING

As Adam early in the morning,  
 Walking forth from the bower refresh'd with sleep,  
 Behold me where I pass, hear my voice, approach,  
 Touch me, touch the palm of your hand to my body as  
 I pass,  
 Be not afraid of my body.

# CALAMUS

## IN PATHS UNTRODDEN

In paths untrodden,  
In the growth by margins of pond-waters,  
Escaped from the life that exhibits itself,  
From all the standards hitherto publish'd, from the  
    pleasures, profits, conformities,  
Which too long I was offering to feed my soul,  
Clear to me now standards not yet publish'd, clear to  
    me that my soul,  
That the soul of the man I speak for rejoices in com-  
    rades,  
Here by myself away from the clank of the world,  
Tallying and talk'd to here by tongues aromatic,  
No longer abash'd, (for in this secluded spot I can  
    respond as I would not dare elsewhere,)  
Strong upon me the life that does not exhibit itself,  
    yet contains all the rest,  
Resolv'd to sing no songs to-day but those of manly  
    attachment,  
Projecting them along that substantial life,  
Bequeathing hence types of athletic love,  
Afternoon this delicious Ninth-month in my forty-first  
    year,  
I proceed for all who are or have been young men,  
To tell the secret of my nights and days,  
To celebrate the need of comrades.

## SCENTED HERBAGE OF MY BREAST

SCENTED herbage of my breast,  
Leaves from you I glean, I write, to be perused best  
    afterwards,  
Tomb-leaves, body-leaves growing up above me above  
    death,



## 92 SCENTED HERBAGE OF MY BREAST

Perennial roots, tall leaves, O the winter shall not freeze  
     you delicate leaves,  
 Every year shall you bloom again, out from where you  
     retired you shall emerge again ;  
 O I do not know whether many passing by will discover  
     you or inhale your faint odour, but I believe a few  
     will ;  
 O slender leaves ! O blossoms of my blood ! I permit  
     you to tell in your own way of the heart that is  
     under you,  
 O I do not know what you mean there underneath  
     yourselves, you are not happiness,  
 You are often more bitter than I can bear, you burn  
     and sting me,  
 Yet you are beautiful to me you faint-tinged roots,  
     you make me think of death,  
 Death is beautiful from you, (what indeed is finally  
     beautiful except death and love ?)  
 O I think it is not for life I am chanting here my chant  
     of lovers, I think it must be for death,  
 For how calm, how solemn it grows to ascend to the  
     atmosphere of lovers,  
 Death or life I am then indifferent, my soul declines  
     to prefer,  
 (I am not sure but the high soul of lovers welcomes  
     death most,)  
 Indeed O death, I think now these leaves mean precisely  
     the same as you mean,  
 Grow up taller sweet leaves that I may see ! grow up  
     out of my breast !  
 Spring away from the conceal'd heart there !  
 Do not fold yourself so in your pink-tinged roots  
     timid leaves !  
 Do not remain down there so ashamed, herbage of my  
     breast !  
 Come I am determin'd to unbare this broad breast of  
     mine, I have long enough stifled and choked ;  
 Emblematic and capricious blades I leave you, now you  
     serve me not,  
 I will say what I have to say by itself,

SCENTED HERBAGE OF MY BREAST 93

I will sound myself and comrades only, I will never  
again utter a call only their call,  
I will raise with it immortal reverberations through the  
States,  
I will give an example to lovers to take permanent  
shape and will through the States,  
Through me shall the words be said to make death  
exhilarating,  
Give me your tone therefore O death, that I may accord  
with it,  
Give me yourself, for I see that you belong to me now  
above all, and are folded inseparably together, you  
love and death are,  
Nor will I allow you to balk me any more with what  
I was calling life,  
For now it is convey'd to me that you are the purports  
essential,  
That you hide in these shifting forms of life, for reasons,  
and that they are mainly for you,  
That you beyond them come forth to remain, the real  
reality,  
That behind the mask of materials you patiently wait,  
no matter how long,  
That you will one day perhaps take control of all,  
That you will perhaps dissipate this entire show of  
appearance,  
That may-be you are what it is all for, but it does not  
last so very long,  
But you will last very long.

WHOEVER YOU ARE HOLDING ME NOW  
IN HAND

WHOEVER you are holding me now in hand,  
Without one thing all will be useless.  
I give you fair warning before you attempt me further,  
I am not what you supposed, but far different.  
Who is he that would become my follower ?  
Who would sign himself a candidate for my affections ?

The way is suspicious, the result uncertain, perhaps  
destructive;

You would have to give up all else, I alone would expect  
to be your sole and exclusive standard,

Your novitiate would even then be long and exhausting,  
The whole past theory of your life and all conformity to  
the lives around you would have to be abandon'd,

Therefore release me now before troubling yourself  
any further, let go your hand from my shoulders,  
Put me down and depart on your way.

Or else by stealth in some wood for trial,

Or back of a rock in the open air,

(For in any roof'd room of a house I emerge not, nor  
in company,

And in libraries I lie as one dumb, a gawk, or unborn,  
or dead,)

But just possibly with you on a high hill, first watching  
lest any person for miles around approach un-  
awares,

Or possibly with you sailing at sea, or on the beach of  
the sea or some quiet island,

Here to put your lips upon mine I permit you,

With the comrade's long-dwelling kiss or the new  
husband's kiss,

For I am the new husband and I am the comrade.

Or if you will, thrusting me beneath your clothing,

Where I may feel the throbs of your heart or rest upon  
your hip,

Carry me when you go forth over land or sea ;

For thus merely touching you is enough, is best,

And thus touching you would I silently sleep and be  
carried eternally.

But these leaves conning you con at peril,

For these leaves and me you will not understand,

They will elude you at first and still more afterward,

I will certainly elude you,

Even while you should think you had unquestionably  
caught me, behold !

Already you see I have escaped from you.

For it is not for what I have put into it that I have  
written this book,  
Nor is it by reading it you will acquire it,  
Nor do those know me best who admire me and vaunt-  
ingly praise me,  
Nor will the candidates for my love (unless at most  
a very few) prove victorious,  
Nor will my poems do good only, they will do just as  
much evil, perhaps more,  
For all is useless without that which you may guess at  
many times and not hit, that which I hinted at ;  
Therefore release me and depart on your way.

## FOR YOU O DEMOCRACY

COME, I will make the continent indissoluble,  
I will make the most splendid race the sun ever shone  
upon,  
I will make divine magnetic lands,  
    With the love of comrades,  
    With the life-long love of comrades.  
I will plant companionship thick as trees along all the  
rivers of America, and along the shores of the great  
lakes, and all over the prairies,  
I will make inseparable cities with their arms about  
each other's necks,  
    By the love of comrades,  
    By the manly love of comrades.  
For you these from me, O Democracy, to serve you  
ma femme !  
For you, for you I am trilling these songs.

## THESE I SINGING IN SPRING

THESE I singing in spring collect for lovers,  
(For who but I should understand lovers and all their  
sorrow and joy ?  
And who but I should be the poet of comrades ?)  
Collecting I traverse the garden the world, but soon I  
pass the gates,

Now along the pond-side, now wading in a little, fearing  
not the wet,

Now by the post-and-rail fences where the old stones  
thrown there, pick'd from the fields, have accumu-  
lated,

(Wild-flowers and vines and weeds come up through  
the stones and partly cover them, beyond these  
I pass,)

Far, far in the forest, or sauntering later in summer,  
before I think where I go,

Solitary, smelling the earthy smell, stopping now and  
then in the silence,

Alone I had thought, yet soon a troop gathers around  
me,

Some walk by my side and some behind, and some  
embrace my arms or neck,

They the spirits of dear friends dead or alive, thicker  
they come, a great crowd, and I in the middle,

Collecting, dispensing, singing, there I wander with  
them,

Plucking something for tokens, tossing toward whoever  
is near me,

Here, lilac, with a branch of pine,

Here, out of my pocket, some moss which I pull'd off  
a live oak in Florida as it hung trailing down,

Here, some pinks and laurel leaves, and a handful  
of sage,

And here what I now draw from the water, wading in  
the pond-side,

(O here I last saw him that tenderly loves me, and  
returns again never to separate from me,

And this, O this shall henceforth be the token of com-  
rades, this calamus-root shall,

Interchange it youths with each other ! let none render  
it back !)

And twigs of maple and a bunch of wild orange and  
chestnut,

And stems of currants and plum-blows, and the aroma-  
tic cedar,

These I compass'd around by a thick cloud of spirits,

Wandering, point to or touch as I pass, or throw them  
loosely from me,  
Indicating to each one what he shall have, giving some-  
thing to each ;  
But what I drew from the water by the pond-side, that  
I reserve,  
I will give of it, but only to them that love as I myself  
am capable of loving.

### OF THE TERRIBLE DOUBT OF APPEAR- ANCES

Of the terrible doubt of appearances,  
Of the uncertainty after all, that we may be deluded,  
That maybe reliance and hope are but speculations  
after all,  
That maybe identity beyond the grave is a beautiful  
fable only,  
Maybe the things I perceive, the animals, plants, men,  
hills, shining and flowing waters,  
The skies of day and night, colours, densities, forms,  
maybe these are (as doubtless they are) only  
apparitions, and the real something has yet to be  
known,  
(How often they dart out of themselves as if to con-  
found me and mock me !  
How often I think neither I know, nor any man knows,  
aught of them,)  
Maybe seeming to me what they are (as doubtless they  
indeed but seem) as from my present point of  
view, and might prove (as of course they would)  
nought of what they appear, or nought anyhow,  
from entirely changed points of view ;  
To me these and the like of these are curiously answer'd  
by my lovers, my dear friends,  
When he whom I love travels with me or sits a long  
while holding me by the hand,  
When the subtle air, the impalpable, the sense that  
words and reason hold not, surround us and  
pervade us,

Then I am charged with untold and untellable wisdom,  
 I am silent, I require nothing further,  
 I cannot answer the question of appearances or that of  
 identity beyond the grave,  
 But I walk or sit indifferent, I am satisfied,  
 He ahoid of my hand has completely satisfied me.

### THE BASE OF ALL METAPHYSICS

AND now gentlemen,  
 A word I give to remain in your memories and minds,  
 As base and finale too for all metaphysics.  
 (So to the students the old professor,  
 At the close of his crowded course.)  
 Having studied the new and antique, the Greek and  
 Germanic systems,  
 Kant having studied and stated, Fichte and Schelling  
 and Hegel,  
 Stated the lore of Plato, and Socrates greater than Plato,  
 And greater than Socrates sought and stated, Christ  
 divine having studied long,  
 I see reminiscent to-day those Greek and Germanic  
 systems,  
 See the philosophies all, Christian churches and tenets see,  
 Yet underneath Socrates clearly see, and underneath  
 Christ the divine I see,  
 The dear love of man for his comrade, the attraction  
 of friend to friend,  
 Of the well-married husband and wife, of children and  
 parents,  
 Of city for city and land for land.

### RECORDERS AGES HENCE

RECORDERS ages hence,  
 Come, I will take you down underneath this impassive  
 exterior, I will tell you what to say of me,  
 Publish my name and hang up my picture as that of  
 the tenderest lover,

The friend the lover's portrait, of whom his friend his  
 lover was fondest,  
 Who was not proud of his songs, but of the measureless  
 ocean of love within him, and freely pour'd it  
 forth,  
 Who often walk'd lonesome walks thinking of his dear  
 friends, his lovers,  
 Who pensive away from one he lov'd often lay sleepless  
 and dissatisfied at night,  
 Who knew too well the sick, sick dread lest the one  
 he lov'd might secretly be indifferent to him,  
 Whose happiest days were far away through fields, in  
 woods, on hills, he and another wandering hand  
 in hand, they twain apart from other men,  
 Who oft as he saunter'd the streets curv'd with his  
 arm the shoulder of his friend, while the arm of  
 his friend rested upon him also.

# WHEN I HEARD AT THE CLOSE OF THE DAY

WHEN I heard at the close of the day how my name  
 had been receiv'd with plaudits in the capitol,  
 still it was not a happy night for me that follow'd,  
 And else when I carous'd, or when my plans were  
 accomplish'd, still I was not happy,  
 But the day when I rose at dawn from the bed of  
 perfect health, refresh'd, singing, inhaling the ripe  
 breath of autumn,  
 When I saw the full moon in the west grow pale and  
 disappear in the morning light,  
 When I wander'd alone over the beach, and undressing  
 bathed, laughing with the cool waters, and saw  
 the sun rise,  
 And when I thought how my dear friend my lover  
 was on his way coming, O then I was happy,  
 O then each breath tasted sweeter, and 'all that day  
 my food nourish'd me more, and the beautiful  
 day pass'd well,  
 And the next came with equal joy, and with the next  
 at evening came my friend,



And that night while all was still I heard the waters  
roll slowly continually up the shores,  
I heard the hissing rustle of the liquid and sands as  
directed to me whispering to congratulate me,  
For the one I love most lay sleeping by me under the  
same cover in the cool night,  
In the stillness in the autumn moonbeams his face was  
inclined toward me,  
And his arm lay lightly around my breast—and that  
night I was happy.

### ARE YOU THE NEW PERSON DRAWN TOWARD ME ?

ARE you the new person drawn toward me ?  
To begin with take warning, I am surely far different  
from what you suppose ;  
Do you suppose you will find in me your ideal ?  
Do you think it so easy to have me become your lover ?  
Do you think the friendship of me would be unalloy'd  
satisfaction ?  
Do you think I am trusty and faithful ?  
Do you see no further than this façade, this smooth  
and tolerant manner of me ?  
Do you suppose yourself advancing on real ground  
toward a real heroic man ?  
Have you no thought O dreamer that it may be all  
maya, illusion ?

### ROOTS AND LEAVES THEMSELVES ALONE

Roots and leaves themselves alone are these,  
Scents brought to men and women from the wild woods  
and pond-side,  
Breast-sorrel and pinks of love, fingers that wind  
around tighter than vines,  
Gushes from the throats of birds hid in the foliage of  
trees as the sun is risen,  
Breezes of land and love set from living shores to you  
on the living sea, to you O sailors !

## ROOTS AND LEAVES THEMSELVES ALONE 101

Frost-mellow'd berries and Third-month twigs offer'd  
fresh to young persons wandering out in the fields  
when the winter breaks up,  
Love-buds put before you and within you whoever  
you are,  
Buds to be unfolded on the old terms,  
If you bring the warmth of the sun to them they will  
open and bring form, colour, perfume, to you,  
If you become the aliment and the wet they will become  
flowers, fruits, tall branches and trees.

## NOT HEAT FLAMES UP AND CONSUMES

Not heat flames up and consumes,  
Not sea-waves hurry in and out,  
Not the air delicious and dry, the air of ripe summer,  
bears lightly along white down-balls of myriads  
of seeds,  
Wafted, sailing gracefully, to drop where they may;  
Not these, O none of these more than the flames of  
me, consuming, burning for his love whom I love,  
O none more than I hurrying in and out;  
Does the tide hurry, seeking something, and never give  
up? O I the same,  
O nor down-balls nor perfumes, nor the high rain-  
emitting clouds, are borne through the open air,  
Any more than my soul is borne through the open air,  
Wafted in all directions O love, for friendship, for you.

## I SAW IN LOUISIANA A LIVE-OAK GROWING

I SAW in Louisiana a live-oak growing,  
All alone stood it and the moss hung down from the  
branches,  
Without any companion it grew there uttering joyous  
leaves of dark green,  
And its look, rude, unbending, lusty, made me think  
of myself,  
But I wonder'd how it could utter joyous leaves  
standing alone there without its friend near, for  
I knew I could not,

And I broke off a twig with a certain number of leaves  
upon it, and twined around it a little moss,  
And brought it away, and I have placed it in sight in  
my room,  
It is not needed to remind me as of my own dear  
friends,  
(For I believe lately I think of little else than of them,)  
Yet it remains to me a curious token, it makes me  
think of manly love ;  
For all that, and though the live-oak glistens there in  
Louisiana solitary in a wide flat space,  
Uttering joyous leaves all its life without a friend  
a lover near,  
I know very well I could not.

### THIS MOMENT YEARNING AND THOUGHTFUL

THIS moment yearning and thoughtful sitting alone,  
It seems to me there are other men in other lands  
yearning and thoughtful,  
It seems to me I can look over and behold them in  
Germany, Italy, France, Spain,  
Or far, far away, in China, or in Russia or Japan,  
talking other dialects,  
And it seems to me if I could know those men I should  
become attached to them as I do to men in my  
own lands,  
O I know we should be brethren and lovers,  
I know I should be happy with them.

### I HEAR IT WAS CHARGED AGAINST ME

I HEAR it was charged against me that I sought to  
destroy institutions,  
But really I am neither for nor against institutions,  
(What indeed have I in common with them ? or what  
with the destruction of them ?)  
Only I will establish in the Mannahatta and in every  
city of these States inland and seaboard

## I HEAR IT WAS CHARGED AGAINST ME 103

And in the fields and woods, and above every keel  
little or large that dents the water,  
Without edifices or rules or trustees or any argument,  
The institution of the dear love of comrades.

## WHEN I PERUSE THE CONQUER'D FAME

WHEN I peruse the conquer'd fame of heroes and the  
victories of mighty generals, I do not envy the  
generals,  
Nor the President in his Presidency, nor the rich in  
his great house,  
But when I hear of the brotherhood of lovers, how it  
was with them,  
How together through life, through dangers, odium,  
unchanging, long and long,  
Through youth and through middle and old age, how  
unfaltering, how affectionate and faithful they  
were,  
Then I am pensive—I hastily walk away fill'd with  
the bitterest envy.

## HERE THE FRAILEST LEAVES OF ME

HERE the frailest leaves of me and yet my strongest  
lasting,  
Here I shade and hide my thoughts, I myself do not  
expose them,  
And yet they expose me more than all my other poems.

## NO LABOUR-SAVING MACHINE

No labour-saving machine,  
Nor discovery have I made,  
Nor will I be able to leave behind me any wealthy  
bequest to found a hospital or library,  
Nor reminiscence of any deed of courage for America,  
Nor literary success nor intellect, nor book for the  
book-shelf,  
But a few carols vibrating through the air I leave,  
For comrades and lovers.

## I DREAM'D IN A DREAM

I DREAM'D in a dream I saw a city invincible to the  
 attacks of the whole of the rest of the earth,  
 I dream'd that was the new city of Friends,  
 Nothing was greater there than the quality of robust  
 love, it led the rest,  
 It was seen every hour in the actions of the men of  
 that city,  
 And in all their looks and words.

WHAT THINK YOU I TAKE MY PEN IN  
HAND ?

WHAT think you I take my pen in hand to record ?  
 The battle-ship, perfect-modell'd, majestic, that I saw  
 pass the offing to-day under full sail ?  
 The splendours of the past day ? or the splendour of  
 the night that envelops me ?  
 Or the vaunted glory and growth of the great city  
 spread around me ?—no ;  
 But merely of two simple men I saw to-day on the  
 pier in the midst of the crowd, parting the parting  
 of dear friends,  
 The one to remain hung on the other's neck and  
 passionately kiss'd him,  
 While the one to depart tightly prest the one to remain  
 in his arms.

## SOMETIMES WITH ONE I LOVE

SOMETIMES with one I love I fill myself with rage for  
 fear I effuse unreturn'd love,  
 But now I think there is no unreturn'd love, the pay  
 is certain one way or another,  
 (I loved a certain person ardently and my love was  
 not return'd,  
 Yet out of that I have written these songs.)

## TO A WESTERN BOY

MANY things to absorb I teach to help you become  
 eleve of mine ;  
 Yet if blood like mine circle not in your veins,  
 If you be not silently selected by lovers and do not  
 silently select lovers,  
 Of what use is it that you seek to become eleve of mine ?

## FAST-ANCHOR'D ETERNAL O LOVE !

FAST-ANCHOR'D eternal O love ! O woman I love !  
 O bride ! O wife ! more resistless than I can tell, the  
 thought of you !  
 Then separate, as disembodied or another born,  
 Ethereal, the last athletic reality, my consolation,  
 I ascend, I float in the regions of your love O man,  
 O sharer of my roving life.

## O YOU WHOM I OFTEN AND SILENTLY COME

O you whom I often and silently come where you are  
 that I may be with you,  
 As I walk by your side or sit near, or remain in the  
 same room with you,  
 Little you know the subtle electric fire that for your  
 sake is playing within me.

## THAT SHADOW MY LIKENESS

THAT shadow my likeness that goes to and fro seeking  
 a livelihood, chattering, chaffering,  
 How often I find myself standing and looking at it  
 where it flits,  
 How often I question and doubt whether that is really  
 me ;  
 But among my lovers and caroling these songs,  
 O I never doubt whether that is really me.

## FULL OF LIFE NOW

FULL of life now, compact, visible,  
I, forty years old the eighty-third year of the States,  
To one a century hence or any number of centuries  
hence,

To you yet unborn these, seeking you.

When you read these I that was visible am become  
invisible,

Now it is you, compact, visible, realizing my poems,  
seeking me,

Fancying how happy you were if I could be with you  
and become your comrade ;

Be it as if I were with you. (Be not too certain but  
I am now with you.)

# SALUT AU MONDE !

## 1

O TAKE my hand Walt Whitman !  
Such gliding wonders ! such sights and sounds !  
Such join'd unended links, each hook'd to the next,  
Each answering all, each sharing the earth with all.  
What widens within you Walt Whitman ?  
What waves and soils exuding ?  
What climes ? what persons and cities are here ?  
Who are the infants, some playing, some slumbering ?  
Who are the girls ? who are the married women ?  
Who are the groups of old men going slowly with their  
arms about each other's necks ?  
What rivers are these ? what forests and fruits are these ?  
What are the mountains call'd that rise so high in the  
mists ?  
What myriads of dwellings are they fill'd with dwellers ?

## 2

Within me latitude widens, longitude lengthens,  
Asia, Africa, Europe, are to the east—America is pro-  
vided for in the west,  
Banding the bulge of the earth winds the hot equator,  
Curiously north and south turn the axis-ends,  
Within me is the longest day, the sun wheels in slanting  
rings, it does not set for months,  
Stretch'd in due time within me the midnight sun just  
rises above the horizon and sinks again,  
Within me zones, seas, cataracts, forests, volcanoes,  
groups,  
Malaysia, Polynesia, and the great West Indian islands.

## 3

What do you hear Walt Whitman ?  
I hear the workman singing and the farmer's wife  
singing,



- I hear in the distance the sounds of children and of  
animals early in the day,  
I hear emulous shouts of Australians pursuing the wild  
horse,  
I hear the Spanish dance with castanets in the chestnut  
shade, to the rebeck and guitar,  
I hear continual echoes from the Thames,  
I hear fierce French liberty songs,  
I hear of the Italian boat-sculler the musical recitative  
of old poems,  
I hear the locusts in Syria as they strike the grain and  
grass with the showers of their terrible clouds,  
I hear the Coptic refrain toward sundown, pensively  
falling on the breast of the black venerable vast  
mother the Nile,  
I hear the chirp of the Mexican muleteer, and the bells  
of the mule,  
I hear the Arab muezzin calling from the top of the  
mosque,  
I hear the Christian priests at the altars of their  
churches, I hear the responsive bass and soprano,  
I hear the cry of the Cossack, and the sailor's voice  
putting to sea at Okotsk,  
I hear the wheeze of the slave-coffe as the slaves march  
on, as the husky gangs pass on by twos and threes,  
fasten'd together with wrist-chains and ankle-  
chains,  
I hear the Hebrew reading his records and psalms,  
I hear the rhythmic myths of the Greeks, and the  
strong legends of the Romans,  
I hear the tale of the divine life and bloody death of  
the beautiful God the Christ,  
I hear the Hindoo teaching his favourite pupil the  
loves, wars, adages, transmitted safely to this day  
from poets who wrote three thousand years ago.

## 4

What do you see Walt Whitman ?  
Who are they you salute, and that one after another  
salute you ?

I see a great round wonder rolling through space,  
I see diminute farms, hamlets, ruins, graveyards, jails,  
factories, palaces, hovels, huts of barbarians, tents  
of nomads upon the surface,  
I see the shaded part on one side where the sleepers  
are sleeping, and the sunlit part on the other side,  
I see the curious rapid change of the light and shade,  
I see distant lands, as real and near to the inhabitants  
of them as my land is to me.

I see plenteous waters,  
I see mountain peaks, I see the sierras of Andes where  
they range,  
I see plainly the Himalayas, Chian Shahs, Altays,  
Ghauts,  
I see the giant pinnacles of Elbruz, Kazbek, Bazardjusi,  
I see the Styrian Alps, and the Karnac Alps,  
I see the Pyrenees, Balks, Carpathians, and to the north  
the Dofrafields, and off at sea mount Hecla,  
I see Vesuvius and Etna, the mountains of the Moon,  
and the Red mountains of Madagascar,  
I see the Lybian, Arabian, and Asiatic deserts,  
I see huge dreadful Arctic and Antarctic icebergs,  
I see the superior oceans and the inferior ones, the  
Atlantic and Pacific, the sea of Mexico, the Brazi-  
lian sea, and the sea of Peru,  
The waters of Hindustan, the China sea, and the gulf  
of Guinea,  
The Japan waters, the beautiful bay of Nagasaki land-  
lock'd in its mountains,  
The spread of the Baltic, Caspian, Bothnia, the British  
shores, and the bay of Biscay,  
The clear-sunn'd Mediterranean, and from one to  
another of its islands,  
The White sea, and the sea around Greenland.

## 5

I see the tracks of the railroads of the earth,  
I see them in Great Britain, I see them in Europe,  
I see them in Asia and in Africa.

I see the electric telegraphs of the earth,  
I see the filaments of the news of the wars, deaths,  
losses, gains, passions, of my race.  
I see the long river-stripes of the earth,  
I see the Amazon and the Paraguay,  
I see the four great rivers of China, the Amour, the  
Yellow River, the Yiang-tse, and the Pearl,  
I see where the Seine flows, and where the Danube, the  
Loire, the Rhone, and the Guadalquiver flow,  
I see the windings of the Volga, the Dnieper, the Oder,  
I see the Tuscan going down the Arno, and the Venetian  
along the Po,  
I see the Greek seaman sailing out of Egina<sup>a</sup> bay.

## 6

I see the site of the old empire of Assyria, and that of  
Persia, and that of India.  
I see the falling of the Ganges over the high rim of  
Saukara.  
I see the place of the idea of the Deity incarnated by  
avatars in human forms,  
I see the spots of the successions of priests on the earth,  
oracles, sacrificers, brahmins, sabians, llamas,  
monks, muftis, exhorters,  
I see where druids walk'd the groves of Mona, I see  
the mistletoe and vervain,  
I see the temples of the deaths of the bodies of Gods,  
I see the old signifiers.  
I see Christ eating the bread of his last supper in the  
midst of youths and old persons,  
I see where the strong divine young man the Hercules  
toil'd faithfully and long and then died,  
I see the place of the innocent rich life and hapless  
fate of the beautiful nocturnal son, the full-limb'd  
Bacchus,  
I see Kneph, blooming, drest in blue, with the crown  
of feathers on his head,  
I see Hermes, unsuspected, dying, well-belov'd, saying  
to the people *Do not weep for me,*

*This is not my true country, I have lived banish'd from  
my true country, I now go back there,  
I return to the celestial sphere where every one goes in his  
turn.*

## 7

I see the battle-fields of the earth, grass grows upon  
them and blossoms and corn,  
I see the tracks of ancient and modern expeditions.  
I see the nameless masonries, venerable messages of  
the unknown events, heroes, records of the earth.  
I see the places of the sagas,  
I see pine-trees and fir-trees torn by northern blasts,  
I see granite boulders and cliffs, I see green meadows  
and lakes,  
I see the burial-cairns of Scandinavian warriors,  
I see them raised high with stones by the marge of  
restless oceans, that the dead men's spirits when  
they wearied of their quiet graves might rise up  
through the mounds and gaze on the tossing  
billows, and be refresh'd by storms, immensity,  
liberty, action.  
I see the steppes of Asia,  
I see the tumuli of Mongolia, I see the tents of Kal-  
mucks and Baskirs,  
I see the nomadic tribes with herds of oxen and cows,  
I see the table-lands notch'd with ravines, I see the  
jungles and deserts,  
I see the camel, the wild steed, the bustard, the fat-  
tail'd sheep, the antelope, and the burrowing  
wolf.  
I see the highlands of Abyssinia,  
I see flocks of goats feeding, and see the fig-tree,  
tamarind, date,  
And see fields of teff-wheat and places of verdure and  
gold.  
I see the Brazilian vaquero,  
I see the Bolivian ascending mount Sorata,

I see the Wacho crossing the plains, I see the incomparable rider of horses with his lasso on his arm,  
I see over the pampas the pursuit of wild cattle for their hides.

## 8

I see the regions of snow and ice,  
I see the sharp-eyed Samoiede and the Finn,  
I see the seal-seeker in his boat poising his lance,  
I see the Siberian on his slight-built sledge drawn by dogs,  
I see the porpoise-hunters, I see the whale-crews of the south Pacific and the north Atlantic,  
I see the cliffs, glaciers, torrents, valleys, of Switzerland  
—I mark the long winters and the isolation.

## 9

I see the cities of the earth and make myself at random a part of them,  
I am a real Parisian,  
I am a habitan of Vienna, St. Petersburg, Berlin, Constantinople,  
I am of Adelaide, Sidney, Melbourne,  
I am of London, Manchester, Bristol, Edinburgh, Limerick,  
I am of Madrid, Cadiz, Barcelona, Oporto, Lyons, Brussels, Berne, Frankfort, Stuttgart, Turin, Florence,  
I belong in Moscow, Cracow, Warsaw, or northward in Christiania or Stockholm, or in Siberian Irkutsk, or in some street in Iceland,  
I descend upon all those cities, and rise from them again.

## 10

I see vapours exhaling from unexplored countries,  
I see the savage types, the bow and arrow, the poison'd splint, the fetich, and the obi.  
I see African and Asiatic towns,  
I see Algiers, Tripoli, Derne, Mogadore, Timbuctoo, Monrovia,

I see the swarms of Pekin, Canton, Benares, Delhi,  
Calcutta, Tokio,  
I see the Kruman in his hut, and the Dahoman and  
Ashantee-man in their huts,  
I see the Turk smoking opium in Aleppo,  
I see the picturesque crowds at the fairs of Khiva and  
those of Herat,  
I see Teheran, I see Muscat and Medina and the  
intervening sands, I see the caravans toiling  
onward,  
I see Egypt and the Egyptians, I see the pyramids and  
obelisks,  
I look on chisell'd histories, records of conquering kings,  
dynasties, cut in slabs of sand-stone, or on granite-  
blocks,  
I see at Memphis mummy-pits containing mummies  
embalm'd, swathed in linen cloth, lying there many  
centuries,  
I look on the fall'n Theban, the large-ball'd eyes, the  
side-drooping neck, the hands folded across the  
breast.

I see all the menials of the earth, labouring,  
I see all the prisoners in the prisons,  
I see the defective human bodies of the earth,  
The blind, the deaf and dumb, idiots, hunchbacks,  
lunatics,  
The pirates, thieves, betrayers, murderers, slave-makers  
of the earth,  
The helpless infants, and the helpless old men and  
women.

I see male and female everywhere,  
I see the serene brotherhood of philosophers,  
I see the constructiveness of my race,  
I see the results of the perseverance and industry of  
my race,  
I see ranks, colours, barbarisms, civilizations, I go  
among them, I mix indiscriminately,  
And I salute all the inhabitants of the earth.

## 11

You whoever you are !  
You daughter or son of England !  
You of the mighty Slavic tribes and empires ! you  
Russ in Russia !  
You dim-descended, black, divine-soul'd African, large,  
fine-headed, nobly-form'd, superbly destin'd, on  
equal terms with me !  
You Norwegian ! Swede ! Dane ! Iceland ! you  
Prussian !  
You Spaniard of Spain ! you Portuguese !  
You Frenchwoman and Frenchman of France !  
You Belge ! you liberty-lover of the Netherlands ! (you  
stock whence I myself have descended ;) )  
You sturdy Austrian ! you Lombard ! Hun ! Bo-  
hemian ! farmer of Styria !  
You neighbour of the Danube !  
You working-man of the Rhine, the Elbe, or the Weser !  
you working-woman too !  
You Sardinian ! you Bavarian ! Swabian ! Saxon !  
Wallachian ! Bulgarian !  
You Roman ! Neapolitan ! you Greek !  
You lithe matador in the arena at Seville !  
You mountaineer living lawlessly on the Taurus or  
Caucasus !  
You Bokh horse-herd watching your mares and stallions  
feeding !  
You beautiful-bodied Persian at full speed in the saddle  
shooting arrows to the mark !  
You Chinaman and Chinawoman of China ! you Tartar  
of Tartary !  
You women of the earth subordinated at your tasks !  
You Jew journeying in your old age through every risk  
to stand once on Syrian ground !  
You other Jews waiting in all lands for your Messiah !  
You thoughtful Armenian pondering by some stream  
of the Euphrates ! you peering amid the ruins of  
Nineveh ! you ascending mount Ararat !  
You foot-worn pilgrim welcoming the far-away sparkle  
of the minarets of Mecca !

You sheiks along the stretch from Suez to Bab-el-  
mandeb ruling your families and tribes !  
You olive-grower tending your fruit on fields of Naza-  
reth, Damascus, or lake Tiberias !  
You Thibet trader on the wide inland or bargaining in  
the shops of Lassa !  
You Japanese man or woman ! you liver in Mada-  
gascar, Ceylon, Sumatra, Borneo !  
All you continentals of Asia, Africa, Europe, Australia,  
indifferent of place !  
All you on the numberless islands of the archipelagoes  
of the sea !  
And you of centuries hence when you listen to me !  
And you each and everywhere whom I specify not, but  
include just the same !  
Health to you ! good-will to you all, from me and  
America sent !

Each of us inevitable,  
Each of us limitless—each of us with his or her right  
upon the earth,  
Each of us allow'd the eternal purports of the earth,  
Each of us here as divinely as any is here.

## 12

You Hottentot with clicking palate ! you woolly-hair'd  
hordes !  
You own'd persons dropping sweat-drops or blood-  
drops !  
You human forms with the fathomless ever-impressive  
countenances of brutes !  
You poor koboo whom the meanest of the rest look  
down upon for all your glimmering language and  
spirituality !  
You dwarf'd Kamtschatkan, Greenlander, Lapp !  
You Austral negro, naked, red, sooty, with protrusive  
lip, grovelling, seeking your food !  
You Caffre, Berber, Soudanese !  
You haggard, uncouth, untutor'd Bedowee !  
You plague-swarms in Madras, Nankin, Kaubul, Cairo !



You benighted roamer of Amazonia ! you Patagonian !  
 you Feejeeman !

I do not prefer others so very much before you either,  
 I do not say one word against you, away back there  
 where you stand,

(You will come forward in due time to my side.)

## 13

My spirit has pass'd in compassion and determination  
 around the whole earth,

I have look'd for equals and lovers and found them  
 ready for me in all lands,

I think some divine rapport has equalized me with  
 them.

You vapours, I think I have risen with you, moved  
 away to distant continents, and fallen down there,  
 for reasons,

I think I have blown with you you winds ;

You waters I have finger'd every shore with you,

I have run through what any river or strait of the  
 globe has run through,

I have taken my stand on the bases of peninsulas and  
 on the high embedded rocks, to cry thence :

*Salut au monde !*

What cities the light or warmth penetrates I penetrate  
 those cities myself,

All islands to which birds wing their way I wing my  
 way myself.

Toward you all, in America's name,

I raise high the perpendicular hand, I make the signal,

To remain after me in sight forever,

For all the haunts and homes of men.

# SONG OF THE OPEN ROAD

## 1

Afoot and light-hearted I take to the open road,  
Healthy, free, the world before me,  
The long brown path before me leading wherever I  
choose.

Henceforth I ask not good-fortune, I myself am good-  
fortune,

Henceforth I whimper no more, postpone no more,  
need nothing,

Done with indoor complaints, libraries, querulous  
criticisms,

Strong and content I travel the open road.

The earth, that is sufficient,

I do not want the constellations any nearer,

I know they are very well where they are,

I know they suffice for those who belong to them.

(Still here I carry my old delicious burdens,

I carry them, men and women, I carry them with me  
wherever I go,

I swear it is impossible for me to get rid of them,

I am fill'd with them, and I will fill them in return.)

## 2

You road I enter upon and look around, I believe you  
are not all that is here,

I believe that much unseen is also here.

Here the profound lesson of reception, nor preference  
nor denial,

The black with his woolly head, the felon, the diseas'd,  
the illiterate person, are not denied ;

The birth, the hasting after the physician, the beggar's  
tramp, the drunkard's stagger, the laughing party  
of mechanics,

The escaped youth, the rich person's carriage, the fop,  
the eloping couple,  
The early market-man, the hearse, the moving of  
furniture into the town, the return back from the  
town,  
They pass, I also pass, any thing passes, none can be  
interdicted,  
None but are accepted, none but shall be dear to me.

## 3

You air that serves me with breath to speak !  
You objects that call from diffusion my meanings and  
give them shape !  
You light that wraps me and all things in delicate  
equable showers !  
You paths worn in the irregular hollows by the road-  
sides !  
I believe you are latent with unseen existences, you  
are so dear to me.

You flagg'd walks of the cities ! you strong curbs at  
the edges !  
You ferries ! you planks and posts of wharves ! you  
timber-lined sides ! you distant ships !  
You rows of houses ! you window-pierc'd façades ! you  
roofs !  
You porches and entrances ! you copings and iron  
guards !  
You windows whose transparent shells might expose  
so much !  
You doors and ascending steps ! you arches !  
You grey stones of interminable pavements ! you  
trodden crossings !  
From all that has touch'd you I believe you have  
imparted to yourselves, and now would impart  
the same secretly to me,  
From the living and the dead you have peopled your  
impassive surfaces, and the spirits thereof would  
be evident and amicable with me.

## 4

The earth expanding right hand and left hand,  
The picture alive, every part in its best light,  
The music falling in where it is wanted, and stopping  
where it is not wanted,  
The cheerful voice of the public road, the gay fresh  
sentiment of the road.

O highway I travel, do you say to me *Do not leave me ?*  
Do you say *Venture not—if you leave me you are lost ?*  
Do you say *I am already prepared, I am well-beaten and*  
*undenied, adhere to me ?*

O public road, I say back I am not afraid to leave you,  
yet I love you,  
You express me better than I can express myself,  
You shall be more to me than my poem.

I think heroic deeds were all conceiv'd in the open air,  
and all free poems also,  
I think I could stop here myself and do miracles,  
I think whatever I shall meet on the road I shall like,  
and whoever beholds me shall like me,  
I think whoever I see must be happy.

## 5

From this hour I ordain myself loos'd of limits and  
imaginary lines,  
Going where I list, my own master total and absolute,  
Listening to others, considering well what they say,  
Pausing, searching, receiving, contemplating,  
Gently, but with undeniable will, divesting myself of  
the holds that would hold me.

I inhale great draughts of space,  
The east and the west are mine, and the north and  
the south are mine.

I am larger, better than I thought,  
I did not know I held so much goodness.

All seems beautiful to me,  
I can repeat over to men and women You have done  
such good to me I would do the same to you,

I will recruit for myself and you as I go,  
I will scatter myself among men and women as I go,  
I will toss a new gladness and roughness among them,  
Whoever denies me it shall not trouble me,  
Whoever accepts me he or she shall be blessed and  
shall bless me.

## 6

Now if a thousand perfect men were to appear it would  
not amaze me,  
Now if a thousand beautiful forms of women appear'd  
it would not astonish me.

Now I see the secret of the making of the best persons,  
It is to grow in the open air and to eat and sleep with  
the earth.

Here a great personal deed has room,  
(Such a deed seizes upon the hearts of the whole race  
of men,  
Its effusion of strength and will overwhelms law and  
mocks all authority and all argument against it.)

Here is the test of wisdom,  
Wisdom is not finally tested in schools,  
Wisdom cannot be pass'd from one having it to another  
not having it,  
Wisdom is of the soul, is not susceptible of proof, is its  
own proof,  
Applies to all stages and objects and qualities and is  
content,  
Is the certainty of the reality and immortality of  
things, and the excellence of things ;  
Something there is in the float of the sight of things  
that provokes it out of the soul.

Now I re-examine philosophies and religions,  
They may prove well in lecture-rooms, yet not prove  
at all under the spacious clouds and along the  
landscape and flowing currents.

Here is realization,  
Here is a man tallied—he realizes here what he has in him,

The past, the future, majesty, love—if they are vacant  
of you, you are vacant of them.

Only the kernel of every object nourishes ;  
Where is he who tears off the husks for you and me ?  
Where is he that undoes stratagems and envelopes for  
you and me ?

Here is adhesiveness, it is not previously fashion'd, it  
is apropos ;  
Do you know what it is as you pass to be loved by  
strangers ?  
Do you know the talk of those turning eye-balls ?

## 7

Here is the efflux of the soul,  
The efflux of the soul comes from within through  
embower'd gates, ever provoking questions,  
These yearnings why are they ? these thoughts in the  
darkness why are they ?  
Why are there men and women that while they are  
nigh me the sunlight expands my blood ?  
Why when they leave me do my pennants of joy sink  
flat and lank ?  
Why are there trees I never walk under but large and  
melodious thoughts descend upon me ?  
(I think they hang there winter and summer on those  
trees and always drop fruit as I pass ;)  
What is it I interchange so suddenly with strangers ?  
What with some driver as I ride on the seat by his  
side ?  
What with some fisherman drawing his seine by the  
shore as I walk by and pause ?  
What gives me to be free to a woman's and man's  
good-will ? what gives them to be free to mine ?

## 8

The efflux of the soul is happiness, here is happiness,  
I think it pervades the open air, waiting at all times,  
Now it flows unto us, we are rightly charged.

Here rises the fluid and attaching character,  
The fluid and attaching character is the freshness and  
sweetness of man and woman,  
(The herbs of the morning sprout no fresher and sweeter  
every day out of the roots of themselves, than it  
sprouts fresh and sweet continually out of itself.)  
Toward the fluid and attaching character exudes the  
sweat of the love of young and old,  
From it falls distill'd the charm that mocks beauty and  
attainments,  
Toward it heaves the shuddering longing ache of con-  
tact.

## 9

Allons ! whoever you are come travel with me !  
Travelling with me you find what never tires.

The earth never tires,  
The earth is rude, silent, incomprehensible at first,  
Nature is rude and incomprehensible at first,  
Be not discouraged, keep on, there are divine things  
well envelop'd,  
I swear to you there are divine things more beautiful  
than words can tell.

Allons ! we must not stop here,  
However sweet these laid-up stores, however convenient  
this dwelling we cannot remain here,  
However shelter'd this port and however calm these  
waters we must not anchor here,  
However welcome the hospitality that surrounds us we  
are permitted to receive it but a little while.

## 10

Allons ! the inducements shall be greater,  
We will sail pathless and wild seas,  
We will go where winds blow, waves dash, and the  
Yankee clipper speeds by under full sail.

Allons ! with power, liberty, the earth, the elements,  
Health, defiance, gaiety, self-esteem, curiosity ;

Allons ! from all formules<sup>4</sup>!

From your formules, O bat-eyed and materialistic  
priests.

The stale cadaver blocks up the passage—the burial  
waits no longer.

Allons ! yet take warning !

He travelling with me needs the best blood, thews,  
endurance,

None may come to the trial till he or she bring courage  
and health,

Come not here if you have already spent the best of  
yourself,

Only those may come who come in sweet and deter-  
min'd bodies,

No diseas'd person, no rum-drinker or venereal taint  
is permitted here.

(I and mine do not convince by arguments, similes,  
rhymes,

We convince by our presence.)

11

Listen ! I will be honest with you,

I do not offer the old smooth prizes, but offer rough  
new prizes,

These are the days that must happen to you :

You shall not heap up what is call'd riches,

You shall scatter with lavish hand all that you earn  
or achieve,

You but arrive at the city to which you were destin'd,  
you hardly settle yourself to satisfaction before  
you are call'd by an irresistible call to depart,

You shall be treated to the ironical smiles and mockings  
of those who remain behind you,

What beckonings of love you receive you shall only  
answer with passionate kisses of parting,

You shall not allow the hold of those who spread their  
reach'd hands toward you.



12<sup>a</sup>

Allons ! after the great Companions, and to belong to them !

They too are on the road—they are the swift and majestic men—they are the greatest women,

Enjoyers of calms of seas and storms of seas,

Sailors of many a ship, walkers of many a mile of land,

Habitué of many distant countries, habitué of far-distant dwellings,

Trusters of men and women, observers of cities, solitary toilers,

Pausers and contemplators of tufts, blossoms, shells of the shore,

Dancers at wedding-dances, kissers of brides, tender helpers of children, bearers of children,

Soldiers of revolts, standers by gaping graves, lowerers-down of coffins,

Journeyers over consecutive seasons, over the years, the curious years each emerging from that which preceded it,

Journeyers as with companions, namely their own diverse phases,

Forth-steppers from the latent unrealized baby-days,

Journeyers gaily with their own youth, journeyers with their bearded and well-grain'd manhood,

Journeyers with their womanhood, ample, unsurpass'd, content,

Journeyers with their own sublime old age of manhood or womanhood,

Old age, calm, expanded, broad with the haughty breadth of the universe,

Old age, flowing free with the delicious near-by freedom of death.

## 13

Allons ! to that which is endless as it was beginningless,

To undergo much, tramps of days, rests of nights,

To merge all in the travel they tend to, and the days and nights they tend to,

Again to merge them in the start of superior journeys,

- To see nothing anywhere but what you may reach it  
and pass it,  
To conceive no time, however distant, but what you  
may reach it and pass it,  
To look up or down no road but it stretches and waits  
for you, however long but it stretches and waits  
for you,  
To see no being, not God's or any, but you also go  
thither,  
To see no possession but you may possess it, enjoying  
all without labour or purchase, abstracting the  
feast yet not abstracting one particle of it,  
To take the best of the farmer's farm and the rich  
man's elegant villa, and the chaste blessings of the  
well-married couple, and the fruits of orchards and  
flowers of gardens,  
To take to your use out of the compact cities as you  
pass through,  
To carry buildings and streets with you afterward  
wherever you go,  
To gather the minds of men out of their brains as you  
encounter them, to gather the love out of their  
hearts,  
To take your lovers on the road with you, for all that  
you leave them behind you,  
To know the universe itself as a road, as many roads,  
as roads for travelling souls.

All parts away for the progress of souls,  
All religion, all solid things, arts, governments—all that  
was or is apparent upon this globe or any globe,  
falls into niches and corners before the procession  
of souls along the grand roads of the universe.

Of the progress of the souls of men and women along  
the grand roads of the universe, all other progress  
is the needed emblem and sustenance.

Forever alive, forever forward,  
Stately, solemn, sad, withdrawn, baffled, mad, turbu-  
lent, feeble, dissatisfied,

Desperate, proud, fond, sick, accepted by men, rejected  
by men,  
They go ! they go ! I know that they go, but I know  
not where they go,  
But I know that they go toward the best—toward  
something great.

Whoever you are, come forth ! or man or woman come  
forth !

You must not stay sleeping and dallying there in the  
house, though you built it, or though it has been  
built for you.

Out of the dark confinement ! out from behind the  
screen !

It is useless to protest, I know all and expose it.

Behold through you as bad as the rest,  
Through the laughter, dancing, dining, supping, of  
people,  
Inside of dresses and ornaments, inside of those wash'd  
and trimm'd faces,  
Behold a secret silent loathing and despair.

No husband, no wife, no friend, trusted to hear the  
confession,

Another self, a duplicate of every one, skulking and  
hiding it goes,

Formless and wordless through the streets of the cities,  
polite and bland in the parlours,

In the cars of railroads, in steamboats, in the public  
assembly,

Home to the houses of men and women, at the table,  
in the bedroom, everywhere,

Smartly attired, countenance smiling, form upright,  
death under the breast-bones, hell under the skull-  
bones,

Under the broadcloth and gloves, under the ribbons  
and artificial flowers,

Keeping fair with the customs, speaking not a syllable  
of itself,

Speaking of any thing else but never of itself.

## 14

Allons ! through struggles and wars !  
The goal that was named cannot be countermanded.

Have the past struggles succeeded ?  
What has succeeded ? yourself ? your nation ? Nature ?  
Now understand me well—it is provided in the essence  
of things that from any fruition of success, no  
matter what, shall come forth something to make  
a greater struggle necessary.

My call is the call of battle, I nourish active rebellion,  
He going with me must go well arm'd;  
He going with me goes often with spare diet, poverty,  
angry enemies, desertions.

## 15

Allons ! the road is before us !  
It is safe—I have tried it—my own feet have tried it  
well—be not detain'd !

Let the paper remain on the desk unwritten, and the  
book on the shelf unopen'd !  
Let the tools remain in the workshop ! let the money  
remain unearn'd !  
Let the school stand ! mind not the cry of the teacher !  
Let the preacher preach in his pulpit ! let the lawyer  
plead in the court, and the judge expound the law.

Camerado, I give you my hand !  
I give you my love more precious than money,  
I give you myself before preaching or law ;  
Will you give me yourself ? will you come travel with  
me ?  
Shall we stick by each other as long as we live ?

# CROSSING BROOKLYN FERRY

## 1

FLOOD-TIDE below me ! I see you face to face !  
Clouds of the west—sun there half an hour high—I see  
you also face to face.

Crowds of men and women attired in the usual costumes,  
how curious you are to me !  
On the ferry-boats the hundreds and hundreds that  
cross, returning home, are more curious to me  
than you suppose,  
And you that shall cross from shore to shore years  
hence are more to me, and more in my meditations,  
than you might suppose.

## 2

The impalpable sustenance of me from all things at all  
hours of the day,  
The simple, compact, well-join'd scheme, myself dis-  
integrated, every one disintegrated yet part of the  
scheme,  
The similitudes of the past and those of the future,  
The glories strung like beads on my smallest sights and  
hearings, on the walk in the street and the passage  
over the river,  
The current rushing so swiftly and swimming with me  
far away,  
The others that are to follow me, the ties between me  
and them,  
The certainty of others, the life, love, sight, hearing  
of others.  
Others will enter the gates of the ferry and cross from  
shore to shore,  
Others will watch the run of the flood-tide,  
Others will see the shipping of Manhattan north and

west, and the heights of Brooklyn to the south  
and east,  
Others will see the islands large and small ;  
Fifty years hence, others will see them as they cross,  
the sun half an hour high,  
A hundred years hence, or ever so many hundred years  
hence, others will see them,  
Will enjoy the sunset, the pouring-in of the flood-tide,  
the falling-back to the sea of the ebb-tide.

## 3

It avails not, time nor place—distance avails not,  
I am with you, you men and women of a generation,  
or ever so many generations hence,  
Just as you feel when you look on the river and sky,  
so I felt,  
Just as any of you is one of a living crowd, I was one  
of a crowd,  
Just as you are refresh'd by the gladness of the river  
and the bright flow, I was refresh'd,  
Just as you stand and lean on the rail, yet hurry with  
the swift current, I stood yet was hurried,  
Just as you look on the numberless masts of ships and  
the thick-stemm'd pipes of steamboats, I look'd.

I too many and many a time cross'd the river of old,  
Watched the Twelfth-month sea-gulls, saw them high  
in the air floating with motionless wings, oscillating  
their bodies,  
Saw how the glistening yellow lit up parts of their  
bodies and left the rest in strong shadow,  
Saw the slow-wheeling circles and the gradual edging  
toward the south,  
Saw the reflection of the summer sky in the water,  
Had my eyes dazzled by the shimmering track of  
beams,  
Look'd at the fine centrifugal spokes of light round the  
shape of my head in the sunlit water,  
Look'd on the haze on the hills southward and south-  
westward,

130      CROSSING BROOKLYN FERRY

Look'd on the vapour as it flew in fleeces tinged with  
violet,  
Look'd toward the lower bay to notice the vessels  
arriving,  
Saw their approach, saw aboard those that were near  
me,  
Saw the white sails of schooners and sloops, saw the  
ships at anchor,  
The sailors at work in the rigging or out astride the  
spars,  
The round masts, the swinging motion of the hulls, the  
slender serpentine pennants,  
The large and small steamers in motion, the pilots in  
their pilot-houses,  
The white wake left by the passage, the quick tremulous  
whirl of the wheels,  
The flags of all nations, the falling of them at sunset,  
The scallop-edged waves in the twilight, the ladled  
cups, the frolicsome crests and glistening,  
The stretch afar growing dimmer and dimmer, the grey  
walls of the granite storehouses by the docks,  
On the river the shadowy group, the big steam-tug  
closely flank'd on each side by the barges, the  
hay-boat, the belated lighter,  
On the neighbouring shore the fires from the foundry  
chimneys burning high and glaringly into the night,  
Casting their flicker of black contrasted with wild red  
and yellow light over the tops of houses, and down  
into the clefts of streets.

4

These and all else were to me the same as they are to  
you,  
I loved well those cities, loved well the stately and  
rapid river,  
The men and women I saw were all near to me,  
Others the same—others who look back on me because  
I look'd forward to them,  
(The time will come, though I stop here to-day and  
to-night.)

## 5

What is it then between us ?

What is the count of the scores or hundreds of years  
between us ?

Whatever it is, it avails not—distance avails not, and  
place avails not,

I too liv'd, Brooklyn of ample hills was mine,

I too walk'd the streets of Manhattan island, and  
bathed in the waters around it,

I too felt the curious abrupt questionings stir within me,  
In the day among crowds of people sometimes they  
came upon me,

In my walks home late at night or as I lay in my bed  
they came upon me,

I too had been struck from the float forever held in  
solution,

I too had receiv'd identity by my body,

That I was I knew was of my body, and what I should  
be I knew I should be of my body.

## 6

It is not upon you alone the dark patches fall,  
The dark threw its patches down upon me also,  
The best I had done seem'd to me blank and suspicious,  
My great thoughts as I supposed them, were they not  
in reality meagre ?

Nor is it you alone who know what it is to be evil,

I am he who knew what it was to be evil,

I too knitted the old knot of contrariety,

Blabb'd, blush'd, resented, lied, stole, grudg'd,

Had guile, anger, lust, hot wishes I dared not speak,

Was wayward, vain, greedy, shallow, sly, cowardly,  
malignant,

The wolf, the snake, the hog, not wanting in me,

The cheating look, the frivolous word, the adulterous  
wish, not wanting,

Refusals, hates, postponements, meanness, laziness,  
none of these wanting,

Was one with the rest, the days and haps of the rest,



Was call'd by my nighest name by clear loud voices of  
 young men as they saw me approaching or passing,  
 Felt their arms on my neck as I stood, or the negligent  
 leaning of their flesh against me as I sat,  
 Saw many I loved in the street or ferry-boat or public  
 assembly, yet never told them a word,  
 Lived the same life with the rest, the same old laughing,  
 gnawing, sleeping,  
 Play'd the part that still looks back on the actor or  
 actress,  
 The same old rôle, the rôle that is what we make it,  
 as great as we like,  
 Or as small as we like, or both great and small.

## 7

Closer yet I approach you,  
 What thought you have of me now, I had as much of  
 you—I laid in my stores in advance,  
 I consider'd long and seriously of you before you were  
 born.

Who was to know what should come home to me ?  
 Who knows but I am enjoying this ?  
 Who knows, for all the distance, but I am as good as  
 looking at you now, for all you cannot see me ?

## 8

Ah, what can ever be more stately and admirable to  
 me than mast-hemm'd Manhattan ?  
 River and sunset and scallop-edg'd waves of flood-  
 tide ?  
 The sea-gulls oscillating their bodies, the hay-boat in  
 the twilight, and the belated lighter ?  
 What gods can exceed these that clasp me by the hand,  
 and with voices I love call me promptly and loudly  
 by my nighest name as I approach ?  
 What is more subtle than this which ties me to the  
 woman or man that looks in my face ?  
 Which fuses me into you now, and pours my meaning  
 into you ?

We understand then do we not ?  
What I promis'd without mentioning it, have you not  
accepted ?  
What the study could not teach—what the preaching  
could not accomplish is accomplish'd, is it not ?

## 9

Flow on, river ! flow with the flood-tide, and ebb with  
the ebb-tide !  
Frolic on, crested and scallop-edg'd waves !  
Gorgeous clouds of the sunset ! drench with your  
splendour me, or the men and women generations  
after me !  
Cross from shore to shore, countless crowds of pas-  
sengers !  
Stand up, tall masts of Mannahatta ! stand up, beauti-  
ful hills of Brooklyn !  
Throb, baffled and curious brain ! throw out questions  
and answers !  
Suspend here and everywhere, eternal float of solution !  
Gaze, loving and thirsting eyes, in the house or street  
or public assembly !  
Sound out, voices of young men ! loudly and musically  
call me by my highest name !  
Live, old life ! play the part that looks back on the  
actor or actress !  
Play the old rôle, the rôle that is great or small accord-  
ing as one makes it !  
Consider, you who peruse me, whether I may not in  
unknown ways be looking upon you ;  
Be firm, rail over the river, to support those who lean  
idly, yet haste with the hasting current ;  
Fly on, sea-birds ! fly sideways, or wheel in large  
circles high in the air ;  
Receive the summer sky, you water, and faithfully  
hold it till all downcast eyes have time to take  
it from you !  
Diverge, fine spokes of light, from the shape of my  
head, or any one's head, in the sunlit water !

134      CROSSING BROOKLYN FERRY

Come on, ships from the lower bay ! pass up or down,  
white-sail'd schooners, sloops, lighters !

Flaunt away, flags of all nations ! be duly lower'd at  
sunset !

Burn high your fires, foundry chimneys ! cast black  
shadows at nightfall ! cast red and yellow light  
over the tops of the houses !

Appearances, now or henceforth, indicate what you are,  
You necessary film, continue to envelop the soul,  
About my body for me, and your body for you, be  
hung our divinest aromas,

Thrive, cities—bring your freight, bring your shows,  
ample and sufficient rivers,

Expand, being than which none else is perhaps more  
spiritual,

Keep your places, objects than which none else is more  
lasting.

You have waited, you always wait, you dumb, beautiful  
ministrers,

We receive you with free sense at last, and are insatiate  
henceforward,

Not you any more shall be able to foil us, or withhold  
yourselves from us,

We use you, and do not cast you aside—we plant you  
permanently within us,

We fathom you not—we love you—there is perfection  
in you also,

You furnish your parts toward eternity,  
Great or small, you furnish your parts toward the soul.

# SONG OF THE ANSWERER

## 1

Now list to my morning's romanza, I tell the signs of  
the Answerer,  
To the cities and farms I sing as they spread in the  
sunshine before me.

A young man comes to me bearing a message from his  
brother,

How shall the young man know the whether and when  
of his brother ?

Tell him to send me the signs.

And I stand before the young man face to face, and  
take his right hand in my left hand and his left  
hand in my right hand,

And I answer for his brother and for men, and I answer  
for him that answers for all, and send these signs.

Him all wait for, him all yield up to, his word is  
decisive and final,

Him they accept, in him lave, in him perceive them-  
selves as amid light,

Him they immerse and he immerses them.

Beautiful women, the haughtiest nations, laws, the  
landscape, people, animals,

The profound earth and its attributes and the unquiet  
ocean, (so tell I my morning's romanza,)

All enjoyments and properties and money, and what-  
ever money will buy,

The best farms, others toiling and planting and he  
unavoidably reaps,

The noblest and costliest cities, others grading and  
building and he domiciles there,

Nothing for any one but what is for him, near and far  
are for him, the ships in the offing,

The perpetual shows and marches on land are for him  
if they are for anybody.

He puts things in their attitudes,  
He puts to-day out of himself with plasticity and love,  
He places his own times, reminiscences, parents,  
brothers and sisters, associations, employment,  
politics, so that the rest never shame them after-  
ward, nor assume to command them.

He is the Answerer,  
What can be answer'd he answers, and what cannot  
be answer'd he shows how it cannot be answer'd.

A man is a summons and challenge,  
(It is vain to skulk—do you hear that mocking and  
laughter? do you hear the ironical echoes?)

Books, friendships, philosophers, priests, action,  
pleasure, pride, beat up and down seeking to give  
satisfaction,

He indicates the satisfaction, and indicates them that  
beat up and down also.

Whichever the sex, whatever the season or place, he  
may go freshly and gently and safely by day or  
by night,

He has the pass-key of hearts, to him the response of  
the prying of hands on the knobs.

His welcome is universal, the flow of beauty is not  
more welcome or universal than he is,

The person he favours by day or sleeps with at night  
is blessed.

Every existence has its idiom, every thing has an idiom  
and tongue,

He resolves all tongues into his own and bestows it  
upon men, and any man translates, and any man  
translates himself also,

One part does not counteract another part, he is the  
joiner, he sees how they join.

He says indifferently and alike *How are you friend?*  
to the President at his levee,

And he says *Good-day my brother*, to Cudge that hoes  
in the sugar-field,

And both understand him and know that his speech  
is right.

He walks with perfect ease in the capitol,  
He walks among the Congress, and one Representative  
says to another, *Here is our equal appearing and  
new.*

Then the mechanics take him for a mechanic,  
And the soldiers suppose him to be a soldier, and the  
sailors that he has follow'd the sea,  
And the authors take him for an author, and the artists  
for an artist,  
And the labourers perceive he could labour with them  
and love them,  
No matter what the work is, that he is the one to  
follow it or has follow'd it,  
No matter what the nation, that he might find his  
brothers and sisters there.

The English believe he comes of their English stock,  
A Jew to the Jew he seems, a Russ to the Russ, usual  
and near, removed from none.

Whoever he looks at in the traveller's coffee-house  
claims him,

The Italian or Frenchman is sure, the German is sure,  
the Spaniard is sure, and the island Cuban is sure,  
The engineer, the deck-hand on the great lakes, or on  
the Mississippi or St. Lawrence or Sacramento, or  
Hudson or Paumanok sound, claims him.

The gentleman of perfect blood acknowledges his perfect blood,

The insulter, the prostitute, the angry person, the  
beggar, see themselves in the ways of him, he  
strangely transmutes them,

They are not vile any more, they hardly know themselves  
they are so grown.

## 2

The indications and tally of time,  
Perfect sanity shows the master among philosophers,

Time, always without break, indicates itself in parts,  
 What always indicates the poet is the crowd of the  
     pleasant company of singers, and their words,  
 The words of the singers are the hours or minutes of  
     the light or dark, but the words of the maker of  
     poems are the general light and dark,  
 The maker of poems settles justice, reality, immor-  
     tality,  
 His insight and power encircle things and the human  
     race,  
 He is the glory and extract thus far of things and of  
     the human race.

The singers do not beget, only the Poet begets,  
 The singers are welcom'd, understood, appear often  
     enough, but rare has the day been, likewise the  
     spot, of the birth of the maker of poems, the  
     Answerer,

(Not every century nor every five centuries has con-  
     tain'd such a day, for all its names.)

The singers of successive hours of centuries may have  
     ostensible names, but the name of each of them is  
     one of the singers,

The name of each is, eye-singer, ear-singer, head-singer,  
     sweet-singer, night-singer, parlour-singer, love-  
     singer, weird-singer, or something else.

All this time and at all times wait the words of true  
     poems,

The words of true poems do not merely please,  
 The true poets are not followers of beauty but the  
     august masters of beauty ;

The greatness of sons is the exuding of the greatness of  
     mothers and fathers,

The words of true poems are the tuft and final applause  
     of science.

Divine instinct, breadth of vision, the law of reason,  
     health, rudeness of body, withdrawnness,  
 Gaiety, sun-tan, air-sweetness, such are some of the  
     words of poems.

The sailor and traveller underlie the maker of poems,  
the Answerer,

The builder, geometer, chemist, anatomist, phrenologist,  
artist, all these underlie the maker of poems, the  
Answerer.

The words of the true poems give you more than  
poems,

They give you to form for yourself poems, religions,  
politics, war, peace, behaviour, histories, essays,  
daily life, and every thing else,

They balance ranks, colours, races, creeds, and the  
sexes,

They do not seek beauty, they are sought,

Forever touching them or close upon them follows  
beauty, longing, fain, love-sick.

They prepare for death, yet are they not the finish,  
but rather the outset.

They bring none to his or her terminus or to be content  
and full,

Whom they take they take into space to behold the  
birth of stars, to learn one of the meanings,

To launch off with absolute faith, to sweep through the  
ceaseless rings and never be quiet again.



## A SONG OF JOYS

- O to make the most jubilant song !  
Full of music—full of manhood, womanhood, infancy !  
Full of common employments—full of grain and trees.
- O for the voices of animals—O for the swiftness and  
balance of fishes !
- O for the dropping of raindrops in a song !  
O for the sunshine and motion of waves in a song !
- O the joy of my spirit—it is uncaged—it darts like  
lightning !  
It is not enough to have this globe or a certain time,  
I will have thousands of globes and all time.
- O the engineer's joys ! to go with a locomotive !  
To hear the hiss of steam, the merry shriek, the steam-  
whistle, the laughing locomotive !  
To push with resistless way and speed off in the dis-  
tance.
- O the gleesome saunter over fields and hill-sides !  
The leaves and flowers of the commonest weeds, the  
moist fresh stillness of the woods,  
The exquisite smell of the earth at daybreak, and all  
through the forenoon.
- O the horseman's and horsewoman's joys !  
The saddle, the gallop, the pressure upon the seat, the  
cool gurgling by the ears and hair.
- O the fireman's joys !  
I hear the alarm at dead of night,  
I hear bells, shouts ! I pass the crowd, I run !  
The sight of the flames maddens me with pleasure.
- O the joy of the strong-brawn'd fighter, towering in the  
arena in perfect condition, conscious of power,  
thirsting to meet his opponent.

O the joy of that vast elemental sympathy which only  
the human soul is capable of generating and  
emitting in steady and limitless floods.

O the mother's joys !

The watching, the endurance, the precious love, the  
anguish, the patiently yielded life.

O the joy of increase, growth, recuperation.

The joy of soothing and pacifying, the joy of concord  
and harmony.

O to go back to the place where I was born,

To hear the birds sing once more,

To ramble about the house and barn and over the fields  
once more,

And through the orchard and along the old lanes once  
more.

O to have been brought up on bays, lagoons, creeks,  
or along the coast,

To continue and be employ'd there all my life,

The briny and damp smell, the shore, the salt weeds  
exposed at low water,

The work of fishermen, the work of the eel-fisher and  
clam-fisher ;

I come with my clam-rake and spade. I come with my  
eel-spear,

Is the tide out ? I join the group of clam-diggers on  
the flats,

I laugh and work with them, I joke at my work like  
a mettlesome young man ;

In winter I take my eel-basket and eel-spear and travel  
out on foot on the ice—I have a small axe to cut  
holes in the ice,

Behold me well-clothed going gaily or returning in the  
afternoon, my brood of tough boys accompanying  
me,

My brood of grown and part-grown boys, who love to  
be with no one else so well as they love to be  
with me,

By day to work with me, and by night to sleep with me.

Another time in warm weather out in a boat, to lift  
the lobster-pots where they are sunk with heavy  
stones, (I know the buoys,)

O the sweetness of the Fifth-month morning upon the  
water as I row just before sunrise toward the  
buoys,

I pull the wicker pots up slantingly, the dark green  
lobsters are desperate with their claws as I take  
them out, I insert wooden pegs in the joints of  
their pincers,

I go to all the places one after another, and then row  
back to the shore,

There in a huge kettle of boiling water the lobsters  
shall be boil'd till their colour becomes scarlet.

Another time mackerel-taking,

Voracious, mad for the hook, near the surface, they  
seem to fill the water for miles ;

Another time fishing for rock-fish in Chesapeake bay,  
I one of the brown-faced crew ;

Another time trailing for blue-fish off Paumanok, I  
stand with braced body,

My left foot is on the gunwale, my right arm throws  
far out the coils of slender rope,

In sight around me the quick veering and darting of  
fifty skiffs, my companions.

O boating on the rivers,

The voyage down the St. Lawrence, the superb scenery,  
the steamers,

The ships sailing, the Thousand Islands, the occasional  
timber-raft and the raftsmen with long-reaching  
sweep-oars,

The little huts on the rafts, and the stream of smoke  
when they cook supper at evening.

(O something pernicious and dread !

Something far away from a puny and pious life !

Something unproved ! something in a trance !

Something escaped from the anchorage and driving  
free.)

O to work in mines, or forging iron,  
Foundry casting, the foundry itself, the rude high roof,  
the ample and shadow'd space,  
The furnace, the hot liquid pour'd out and running.

O to resume the joys of the soldier !  
To feel the presence of a brave commanding officer—  
to feel his sympathy !  
To behold his calmness—to be warm'd in the rays of  
his smile !  
To go to battle—to hear the bugles play and the  
drums beat !  
To hear the crash of artillery—to see the glittering of  
the bayonets and musket-barrels in the sun !  
To see men fall and die and not complain !  
To taste the savage taste of blood—to be so devilish !  
To gloat so over the wounds and deaths of the enemy.

O the whaleman's joys ! O I cruise my old cruise  
again !  
I feel the ship's motion under me, I feel the Atlantic  
breezes fanning me,  
I hear the cry again sent down from the mast-head,  
*There—she blows !*  
Again I spring up the rigging to look with the rest—we  
descend, wild with excitement,  
I leap in the lower'd boat, we row toward our prey  
where he lies,  
We approach stealthy and silent, I see the mountainous  
mass, lethargic, basking,  
I see the harpooner standing up, I see the weapon dart  
from his vigorous arm ;  
O, swift again far out in the ocean the wounded whale,  
settling, running to windward, tows me,  
Again I see him rise to breathe, we row close again,  
I see a lance driven through his side, press'd deep,  
turn'd in the wound,  
Again we back off, I see him settle again, the life is  
leaving him fast,  
As he rises he spouts blood, I see him swim in circles

narrower and narrower, swiftly cutting the water  
—I see him die,  
He gives one convulsive leap in the centre of the  
circle, and then falls flat and still in the bloody  
foam.

O the old manhood of me, my noblest joy of all !  
My children and grand-children, my white hair and  
beard,  
My largeness, calmness, majesty, out of the long stretch  
of my life.

O ripen'd joy of womanhood ! O happiness at last !  
I am more than eighty years of age, I am the most  
venerable mother,  
How clear is my mind—how all people draw nigh to  
me !  
What attractions are these beyond any before ? what  
bloom more than the bloom of youth ?  
What beauty is this that descends upon me and rises  
out of me ?

O the orator's joys !  
To inflate the chest, to roll the thunder of the voice  
out from the ribs and throat,  
To make the people rage, weep, hate, desire, with  
yourself,  
To lead America—to quell America with a great  
tongue.

O the joy of my soul leaning pois'd on itself, receiving  
identity through materials and loving them, observ-  
ing characters and absorbing them,  
My soul vibrated back to me from them, from sight,  
hearing, touch, reason, articulation, comparison,  
memory, and the like,  
The real life of my senses and flesh transcending my  
senses and flesh,  
My body done with materials, my sight done with my  
material eyes,  
Proved to me this day beyond cavil that it is not my  
material eyes which finally see,

Nor my material body which finally loves, walks,  
laughs, shouts, embraces, procreates.

O the farmer's joys !

Ohioan's, Illinoisian's, Wisconsinese', Kanadian's,  
Iowan's, Kansian's, Missourian's, Oregonese' joys !

To rise at peep of day and pass forth nimbly to work,

To plough land in the fall for winter-sown crops,

To plough land in the spring for maize,

To train orchards, to graft the trees, to gather apples  
in the fall.

O to bathe in the swimming-bath, or in a good place  
along shore,

To splash the water ! to walk ankle-deep, or race  
naked along the shore.

O to realize space !

The plenteousness of all, that there are no bounds,

To emerge and be of the sky, of the sun and moon and  
flying clouds, as one with them.

O the joy of a manly self-hood !

To be servile to none, to defer to none, not to any  
tyrant known or unknown,

To walk with erect carriage, a step springy and  
elastic,

To look with calm gaze or with a flashing eye,

To speak with a full and sonorous voice out of a broad  
chest,

To confront with your personality all the other per-  
sonalities of the earth.

Know'st thou the excellent joys of youth ?

Joys of the dear companions and of the merry word  
and laughing face ?

Joy of the glad light-beaming day, joy of the wide-  
breath'd games ?

Joy of sweet music, joy of the lighted ball-room and  
the dancers ?

Joy of the plenteous dinner, strong carouse and drink-  
ing ?

Yet O my soul supreme !

Know'st thou the joys of pensive thought ?

Joys of the free and lonesome heart, the tender, gloomy heart ?

Joys of the solitary walk, the spirit bow'd yet proud, the suffering and the struggle ?

The agonistic throes, the ecstasies, joys of the solemn musings day or night ?

Joys of the thought of Death, the great spheres Time and Space ?

Prophetic joys of better, loftier love's ideals, the divine wife, the sweet, eternal, perfect comrade ?

Joys all thine own undying one, joys worthy thee O soul.

O while I live to be the ruler of life, not a slave,

To meet life as a powerful conqueror,

No fumes, no ennui, no more complaints or scornful criticisms,

To these proud laws of the air, the water and the ground, proving my interior soul impregnable,

And nothing exterior shall ever take command of me.

For not life's joys alone I sing, repeating—the joy of death !

The beautiful touch of Death, soothing and benumbing a few moments, for reasons,

Myself discharging my excrementitious body to be burn'd, or render'd to powder, or buried,

My real body doubtless left to me for other spheres,

My voided body nothing more to me, returning to the purifications, further offices, eternal uses of the earth.

O to attract by more than attraction !

How it is I know not—yet behold ! the something which obeys none of the rest,

It is offensive, never defensive—yet how magnetic it draws.

O to struggle against great odds, to meet enemies undaunted !

To be entirely alone with them, to find how much one  
can stand !

To look strife, torture, prison, popular odium, face to  
face !

To mount the scaffold, to advance to the muzzles of  
guns with perfect nonchalance !

To be indeed a God !

O to sail to sea in a ship !

To leave this steady unendurable land,

To leave the tiresome sameness of the streets, the side-  
walks and the houses,

To leave you O you solid motionless land, and entering  
a ship,

To sail and sail and sail !

O to have life henceforth a poem of new joys !

To dance, clap hands, exult, shout, skip, leap, roll on,  
float on !

To be a sailor of the world bound for all ports,

A ship itself, (see indeed these sails I spread to the sun  
and air,)

A swift and swelling ship full of rich words, full of joys.



# SONG OF THE BROAD-AXE

## 1

WEAPON shapely, naked, wan,  
Head from the mother's bowels drawn,  
Wooded flesh and metal bone, limb only one and lip  
only one,  
Grey-blue leaf by red-heat grown, helve produced from  
a little seed sown,  
Resting the grass amid and upon,  
To be lean'd and to lean on.  
Strong shapes and attributes of strong shapes, mascu-  
line trades, sights and sounds,  
Long varied train of an emblem, dabs of music,  
Fingers of the organist skipping staccato over the keys  
of the great organ.

## 2

Welcome are all earth's lands, each for its kind,  
Welcome are lands of pine and oak,  
Welcome are lands of the lemon and fig,  
Welcome are lands of gold,  
Welcome are lands of wheat and maize, welcome those  
of the grape,  
Welcome are lands of sugar and rice,  
Welcome the cotton-lands, welcome those of the white  
potato and sweet potato,  
Welcome are mountains, flats, sands, forests, prairies,  
Welcome the rich borders of rivers, table-lands, open-  
ings,  
Welcome the measureless grazing-lands, welcome the  
teeming soil of orchards, flax, honey, hemp ;  
Welcome just as much the other more hard-faced lands,  
Lands rich as lands of gold or wheat and fruit lands,  
Lands of mines, lands of the manly and rugged ores,  
Lands of coal, copper, lead, tin, zinc,  
Lands of iron—lands of the make of the axe.

## 3

The log at the wood-pile, the axe supported by it,  
The sylvan hut, the vine over the doorway, the space  
clear'd for a garden,  
The irregular tapping of rain down on the leaves after  
the storm is lull'd,  
The wailing and moaning at intervals, the thought of  
the sea,  
The thought of ships struck in the storm and put on  
their beam ends, and the cutting away of  
masts,  
The sentiment of the huge timbers of old-fashion'd  
houses and barns,  
The remember'd print or narrative, the voyage at a  
venture of men, families, goods,  
The disembarkation, the founding of a new city,  
The voyage of those who sought a New England and  
found it, the outset anywhere,  
The settlements of the Arkansas, Colorado, Ottawa,  
Willamette,  
The slow progress, the scant fare, the axe, rifle, saddle-  
bags ;  
The beauty of all adventurous and daring persons,  
The beauty of wood-boys and wood-men with their  
clear untrimm'd faces,  
The beauty of independence, departure, actions that  
rely on themselves,  
The American contempt for statutes and ceremonies,  
the boundless impatience of restraint,  
The loose drift of character, the inkling through random  
types, the solidification ;  
The butcher in the slaughter-house, the hands aboard  
schooners and sloops, the raftsmen, the pioneer,  
Lumbermen in their winter camp, daybreak in the  
woods, stripes of snow on the limbs of trees, the  
occasional snapping,  
The glad clear sound of one's own voice, the merry  
song, the natural life of the woods, the strong day's  
work,

The blazing fire at night, the sweet taste of supper, the  
talk, the bed of hemlock-boughs and the bear-skin ;  
The house-builder at work in cities or anywhere,  
The preparatory jointing, squaring, sawing, mortising,  
The hoist-up of beams, the push of them in their  
places, laying them regular,  
Setting the studs by their tenons in the mortises  
according as they were prepared,  
The blows of mallets and hammers, the attitudes of the  
men, their curv'd limbs,  
Bending, standing, astride the beams, driving in pins,  
holding on by posts and braces,  
The hook'd arm over the plate, the other arm wielding  
the axe,  
The floor-men forcing the planks close to be nail'd,  
Their postures bringing their weapons downward on  
the bearers,  
The echoes resounding through the vacant building ;  
The huge storehouse carried up in the city well under  
way,  
The six framing-men, two in the middle and two at  
each end, carefully bearing on their shoulders a  
heavy stick for a cross-beam,  
The crowded line of masons with trowels in their right  
hands rapidly laying the long side-wall, two  
hundred feet from front to rear,  
The flexible rise and fall of backs, the continual click  
of the trowels striking the bricks,  
The bricks one after another each laid so workmanlike  
in its place, and set with a knock of the trowel-  
handle,  
The piles of materials, the mortar on the mortar-  
boards, and the steady replenishing by the hod-  
men ;  
Spar-makers in the spar-yard, the swarming row of  
well-grown apprentices,  
The swing of their axes on the square-hew'd log shaping  
it toward the shape of a mast,  
The brisk short crackle of the steel driven slantingly  
into the pine,

The butter-colour'd chips flying off in great flakes and  
slivers,  
The limber motion of brawny young arms and hips in  
easy costumes,  
The constructor of wharves, bridges, piers, bulk-heads,  
floats, stays against the sea ;  
The city fireman, the fire that suddenly bursts forth in  
the close-pack'd square,  
The arriving engines, the hoarse shouts, the nimble  
stepping and daring,  
The strong command through the fire-trumpets, the  
falling in line, the rise and fall of the arms forcing  
the water,  
The slender, spasmic, blue-white jets, the bringing to  
bear of the hooks and ladders and their execution,  
The crash and cut away of connecting wood-work, or  
through floors if the fire smoulders under them,  
The crowd with their lit faces watching, the glare and  
dense shadows ;  
The forger at his forge-furnace and the user of iron  
after him,  
The maker of the axe large and small, and the welder  
and temperer,  
The chooser breathing his breath on the cold steel and  
trying the edge with his thumb,  
The one who clean-shapes the handle and sets it firmly  
in the socket ;  
The shadowy processions of the portraits of the past  
users also,  
The primal patient mechanics, the architects and  
engineers,  
The far-off Assyrian edifice and Mizra edifice,  
The Roman lictors preceding the consuls,  
The antique European warrior with his axe in  
combat,  
The uplifted arm, the clatter of blows on the helmeted  
head,  
The death-howl, the limpsy tumbling body, the rush of  
friend and foe thither,  
The siege of revolted lieges determin'd for liberty,

The summons to surrender, the battering at castle  
gates, the truce and parley,  
The sack of an old city in its time,  
The bursting in of mercenaries and bigots tumultuously  
and disorderly,  
Roar, flames, blood, drunkenness, madness,  
Goods freely rifled from houses and temples, screams of  
women in the grip of brigands,  
Craft and thievery of camp-followers, men running, old  
persons despairing,  
The hell of war, the cruelties of creeds,  
The list of all executive deeds and words just or unjust,  
The power of personality just or unjust.

## 4

Muscle and pluck forever !  
What invigorates life invigorates death,  
And the dead advance as much as the living advance,  
And the future is no more uncertain than the present,  
For the roughness of the earth and of man encloses as  
much as the delicatessen of the earth and of man,  
And nothing endures but personal qualities.

What do you think endures ?  
Do you think a great city endures ?  
Or a teeming manufacturing state ? or a prepared con-  
stitution ? or the best built steamships ?  
Or hotels of granite and iron ? or any chef-d'œuvres of  
engineering, forts, armaments ?

Away ! these are not to be cherish'd for themselves,  
They fill their hour, the dancers dance, the musicians  
play for them,  
The show passes, all does well enough of course,  
All does very well till one flash of defiance.

A great city is that which has the greatest men and  
women,  
If it be a few ragged huts it is still the greatest city in  
the whole world.

## 5

The place where a great city stands is not the place of  
stretch'd wharves, docks, manufactures, deposits  
of produce merely,  
Nor the place of ceaseless salutes of new-comers or the  
anchor-lifters of the departing,  
Nor the place of the tallest and costliest buildings or  
shops selling goods from the rest of the earth,  
Nor the place of the best libraries and schools, nor the  
place where money is plentiest,  
Nor the place of the most numerous population.  
Where the city stands with the brawniest breed of  
orators and bards,  
Where the city stands that is belov'd by these, and  
loves them in return and understands them,  
Where no monuments exist to heroes but in the common  
words and deeds,  
Where thrift is in its place, and prudence is in its place,  
Where the men and women think lightly of the laws,  
Where the slave ceases, and the master of slaves ceases,  
Where the populace rise at once against the never-  
ending audacity of elected persons,  
Where fierce men and women pour forth as the sea to  
the whistle of death pours its sweeping and unript  
waves,  
Where outside authority enters always after the pre-  
cedence of inside authority,  
Where the citizen is always the head and ideal, and  
President, Mayor, Governor and what not, are  
agents for pay,  
Where children are taught to be laws to themselves,  
and to depend on themselves,  
Where equanimity is illustrated in affairs,  
Where speculations on the soul are encouraged,  
Where women walk in public processions in the streets  
the same as the men,  
Where they enter the public assembly and take places  
the same as the men ;  
Where the city of the faithfulest friends stands,

Where the city of the cleanliness of the sexes stands,  
 Where the city of the healthiest fathers stands,  
 Where the city of the best-bodied mothers stands,  
 There the great city stands.

## 6

How beggarly appear arguments before a defiant deed !  
 How the floridness of the materials of cities shrivels  
     before a man's or woman's look !

All waits or goes by default till a strong being appears ;  
 A strong being is the proof of the race and of the  
     ability of the universe,

When he or she appears materials are overaw'd,  
 The dispute on the soul stops,  
 The old customs and phrases are confronted, turn'd  
     back, or laid away.

What is your money-making now ? what can it do  
     now ?

What is your respectability now ?

What are your theology, tuition, society, traditions,  
     statute-books, now ?

Where are your jibes of being now ?

Where are your cavils about the soul now ?

## 7

A sterile landscape covers the ore, there is as good as  
     the best for all the forbidding appearance,

There is the mine, there are the miners,  
 The forge-furnace is there, the melt is accomplish'd,  
     the hammersmen are at hand with their tongs and  
     hammers,

What always served and always serves is at hand.

Than, this nothing has better served, it has served all,  
 Served the fluent-tongued and subtle-sensed Greek,  
     and long ere the Greek,

Served in building the buildings that last longer than  
     any,

Served the Hebrew, the Persian, the most ancient  
     Hindustanee.

Served the mound-raiser on the Mississippi, served  
those whose relics remain in Central America,  
Served Albic temples in woods or on plains, with  
unhewn pillars and the druids,  
Served the artificial clefts, vast, high, silent, on the  
snow-cover'd hills of Scandinavia,  
Served those who time out of mind made on the granite  
walls rough sketches of the sun, moon, stars, ships,  
ocean waves,  
Served the paths of the irruptions of the Goths, served  
the pastoral tribes and nomads,  
Served the long distant Kelt, served the hardy pirates  
of the Baltic,  
Served before any of those the venerable and harmless  
men of Ethiopia,  
Served the making of helms for the galleys of pleasure  
and the making of those for war,  
Served all great works on land and all great works on  
the sea,  
For the mediaeval ages and before the mediaeval ages,  
Served not the living only then as now, but served the  
dead.

## 8

I see the European headsman,  
He stands mask'd, clothed in red, with huge legs and  
strong naked arms,  
And leans on a ponderous axe.

(Whom have you slaughter'd lately European heads-  
man ?

Whose is that blood upon you so wet and sticky ?)

I see the clear sunsets of the martyrs,  
I see from the scaffolds the descending ghosts,  
Ghosts of dead lords, uncrown'd ladies, impeach'd  
ministers, rejected kings,  
Rivals, traitors, poisoners, disgraced chieftains and the  
rest.

I see those who in any land have died for the good  
cause,



The seed is spare, nevertheless the crop shall never run out,

(Mind you O foreign kings, O priests, the crop shall never run out.)

I see the blood wash'd entirely away from the axe,  
Both blade and helve are clean,  
They spirt no more the blood of European nobles, they  
clasp no more the necks of queens.

I see the headsman withdraw and become useless,  
I see the scaffold untrodden and mouldy, I see no longer  
any axe upon it,  
I see the mighty and friendly emblem of the power of  
my own race, the newest, largest race.

## 9

(America ! I do not vaunt my love for you,  
I have what I have.)

The axe leaps !  
The solid forest gives fluid utterances,  
They tumble forth, they rise and form,  
Hut, tent, landing, survey,  
Flail, plough, pick, crowbar, spade,  
Shingle, rail, prop, wainscot, jamb, lath, panel, gable,  
Citadel, ceiling, saloon, academy, organ, exhibition-  
house, library,  
Cornice, trellis, pilaster, balcony, window, turret,  
porch,  
Hoe, rake, pitchfork, pencil, wagon, staff, saw, jack-  
plane, mallet, wedge, rounce,  
Chair, tub, hoop, table, wicket, vane, sash, floor,  
Work-box, chest, string'd instrument, boat, frame, and  
what not,  
Capitols of States, and capitol of the nation of States,  
Long stately rows in avenues, hospitals for orphans or  
for the poor or sick,  
Manhattan steamboats and clippers taking the measure  
of all seas.

The shapes arise !

Shapes of the using of axes anyhow, and the users and  
all that neighbours them,

Cutters down of wood and haulers of it to the Penobscot  
or Kennebec,

Dwellers in cabins among the Californian mountains or  
by the little lakes, or on the Columbia,

Dwellers south on the banks of the Gila or Rio Grande,  
friendly gatherings, the characters and fun,

Dwellers along the St. Lawrence, or north in Kanada,  
or down by the Yellowstone, dwellers on coasts  
and off coasts,

Seal-fishers, whalers, arctic seamen breaking passages  
through the ice.

The shapes arise !

Shapes of factories, arsenals, foundries, markets,

Shapes of the two-threaded tracks of railroads,

Shapes of the sleepers of bridges, vast frameworks,  
girders, arches,

Shapes of the fleets of barges, tows, lake and canal  
craft, river craft,

Ship-yards and dry-docks along the Eastern and  
Western seas, and in many a bay and by-place,

The live-oak kelsons, the pine planks, the spars, the  
hackmatack-roots for knees,

The ships themselves on their ways, the tiers of scaffolds,  
the workmen busy outside and inside,

The tools lying around, the great auger and little  
auger, the adze, bolt, line, square, gouge, and  
bead-plane.

10

The shapes arise !

The shape measur'd, saw'd, jack'd, join'd, stain'd,  
The coffin-shape for the dead to lie within in his  
shroud,

The shape got out in posts, in the bedstead posts, in  
the posts of the bride's bed,

The shape of the little trough, the shape of the rockers  
beneath, the shape of the babe's cradle,

The shape of the floor-planks, the floor-planks for  
dancers' feet,  
The shape of the planks of the family home, the home  
of the friendly parents and children,  
The shape of the roof of the home of the happy young  
man and woman, the roof over the well-married  
young man and woman,  
The roof over the supper joyously cook'd by the chaste  
wife, and joyously eaten by the chaste husband,  
content after his day's work.

The shapes arise !

The shape of the prisoner's place in the court-room,  
and of him or her seated in the place,

The shape of the liquor-bar lean'd against by the  
young rum-drinker and the old rum-drinker,

The shape of the shamed and angry stairs trod by  
sneaking footsteps,

The shape of the sly settee, and the adulterous un-  
wholesome couple,

The shape of the gambling-board with its devilish  
winnings and losings,

The shape of the step-ladder for the convicted and  
sentenced murderer, the murderer with haggard  
face and pinion'd arms,

The sheriff at hand with his deputies, the silent and  
white-lipp'd crowd, the dangling of the rope.

The shapes arise !

Shapes of doors giving many exits and entrances,

The door passing the dissever'd friend flush'd and in  
haste,

The door that admits good news and bad news,

The door whence the son left home confident and puff'd  
up,

The door he enter'd again from a long and scandalous  
absence, discas'd, broken down, without innocence,  
without means.

Her shape arises,

She less guarded than ever, yet more guarded than ever,

The gross and soil'd she moves among do not make her  
gross and soil'd,  
She knows the thoughts as she passes, nothing is con-  
ceal'd from her,  
She is none the less considerate or friendly therefor,  
She is the best belov'd, it is without exception, she has  
no reason to fear and she does not fear,  
Oaths, quarrels, hiccupp'd songs, smutty expressions,  
are idle to her as she passes,  
She is silent, she is possess'd of herself, they do not  
offend her,  
She receives them as the laws of Nature receive them,  
she is strong,  
She too is a law of Nature—there is no law stronger  
than she is.

## 12

The main shapes arise !  
Shapes of Democracy total, result of centuries,  
Shapes ever projecting other shapes,  
Shapes of turbulent manly cities,  
Shapes of the friends and home-givers of the whole  
earth,  
Shapes bracing the earth and braced with the whole  
earth.

## FROM THE 'SONG OF THE EXPOSITION'

(Ah little reck's the labourer,  
How near his work is holding him to God.  
The loving Labourer through space and time.)

After all not to create only, or found only,  
But to bring perhaps from afar what is already founded,  
To give it our own identity, average, limitless, free,  
To fill the gross the torpid bulk with vital religious fire,  
Not to repel or destroy so much as accept, fuse, re-  
habilitate,

To obey as well as command, to follow more than to  
lead,

These also are the lessons of our New World ;  
While how little the New after all, how much the Old,  
Old World !

Long and long has the grass been growing,  
Long and long has the rain been falling,  
Long has the globe been rolling round.

# SONG OF THE REDWOOD-TREE

## I

A CALIFORNIA song,  
A prophecy and indirection, a thought impalpable to  
    breathe as air,  
A chorus of dryads, fading, departing, or hamadryads  
    departing,  
A murmuring, fateful, giant voice, out of the earth and  
    sky,  
Voice of a mighty dying tree in the redwood forest  
    dense.

*Farewell my brethren,  
Farewell O earth and sky, farewell ye neighbouring waters,  
My time has ended, my term has come.*

Along the northern coast,  
Just back from the rock-bound shore and the caves,  
In the saline air from the sea in the Mendocino country,  
With the surge for base and accompaniment low and  
    hoarse,  
With crackling blows of axes sounding musically driven  
    by strong arms,  
Riven deep by the sharp tongues of the axes, there in  
    the redwood forest dense,  
I heard the mighty tree its death-chant chanting.  
The choppers heard not, the camp shanties echoed  
    not,  
The quick-ear'd teamsters and chain and jack-screw  
    men heard not,  
As the wood-spirits came from their haunts of a  
    thousand years to join the refrain,  
But in my soul I plainly heard.

Murmuring out of its myriad leaves,  
Down from its lofty top rising two hundred feet high,

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Out of its stalwart trunk and limbs, out of its foot-  
thick bark,  
That chant of the seasons and time, chant not of the  
past only but the future.

*You untold life of me,  
And all you venerable and innocent joys,  
Perennial hardy life of me with joys 'mid rain and many  
a summer sun,  
And the white snows and night and the wild winds ;  
O the great patient rugged joys, my soul's strong joys  
unreck'd by man,  
(For know I bear the soul befitting me, I too have con-  
sciousness, identity,  
And all the rocks and mountains have, and all the earth,)  
Joys of the life befitting me and brothers mine,  
Our time, our term has come.*

*Nor yield we mournfully majestic brothers,  
We who have grandly fill'd our time ;  
With Nature's calm content, with tacit huge delight,  
We welcome what we wrought for through the past,  
And leave the field for them.*

*For them predicted long,  
For a superber race, they too to grandly fill their time,  
For them we abdicate, in them ourselves ye forest kings !  
In them these skies and airs, these mountain peaks,  
Shasta, Nevadas,  
These huge precipitous cliffs, this amplitude, these valleys,  
far Yosemite,  
To be in them absorb'd, assimilated.*

Then to a loftier strain,  
Still prouder, more ecstatic rose the chant,  
As if the heirs, the deities of the West,  
Joining with master-tongue bore part.

*Not wan from Asia's fetiches,  
Nor red from Europe's old dynastic slaughter-house,  
(Area of murder-plots of thrones, with scent left yet of  
wars and scaffolds everywhere,)*

*But come from Nature's long and harmless throes, peacefully builded thence,*

*These virgin lands, lands of the Western shore,  
To the new culminating man, to you, the empire new,  
You promis'd long, we pledge, we dedicate.*

*You occult deep volitions,*

*You average spiritual manhood, purpose of all, pois'd on  
yourself, giving not taking law,*

*You womanhood divine, mistress and source of all,  
whence life and love and aught that comes from life  
and love,*

*You unseen moral essence of all the vast materials of  
America, (age upon age working in death the same  
as life,)*

*You that, sometimes known, oftener unknown, really  
shape and mould the New World, adjusting it to  
Time and Space,*

*You hidden national will lying in your abysses, conceal'd  
but ever alert,*

*You past and present purposes tenaciously pursued,  
maybe unconscious of yourselves,*

*Unswerv'd by all the passing errors, perturbations of the  
surface ;*

*You vital, universal, deathless germs, beneath all creeds,  
arts, statutes, literatures,*

*Here build your homes for good, establish here, these areas  
entire, lands of the Western shore,*

*We pledge, we dedicate to you.*

*For man of you, your characteristic race,*

*Here may he hardy, sweet, gigantic grow, here tower  
proportionate to Nature,*

*Here climb the vast pure spaces unconfined, uncheck'd by  
wall or roof,*

*Here laugh with storm or sun, here joy, here patiently  
inure,*

*Here heed himself, unfold himself, (not others' formulas  
heed,) here fill his time,*

*To duly fall, to aid, unreck'd at last,*

*To disappear, to serve.*



Thus on the northern coast,  
 In the echo of teamsters' calls and the clinking chains,  
     and the music of choppers' axes,  
 The falling trunk and limbs, the crash, the muffled  
     shriek, the groan,  
 Such words combined from the redwood-tree, as of  
     voices ecstatic, ancient and rustling,  
 The century-lasting, unseen dryads, singing, with-  
     drawing,  
 All their recesses of forests and mountains leaving,  
 From the Cascade range to the Wahsatch, or Idaho far,  
     or Utah,  
 To the deities of the modern henceforth yielding,  
 The chorus and indications, the vistas of coming  
     humanity, the settlements, features all,  
 In the Mendocino woods I caught.

## 2

The flashing and golden pageant of California,  
 The sudden and gorgeous drama, the sunny and ample  
     lands,  
 The long and varied stretch from Puget sound to  
     Colorado south,  
 Lands bathed in sweeter, rarer, healthier air, valleys  
     and mountain cliffs,  
 The fields of Nature long prepared and fallow, the  
     silent, cyclic chemistry,  
 The slow and steady ages plodding, the unoccupied  
     surface ripening, the rich ores forming beneath ;  
 At last the New arriving, assuming, taking possession,  
 A swarming and busy race settling and organizing  
     everywhere,  
 Ships coming in from the whole round world, and going  
     out to the whole world,  
 To India and China and Australia and the thousand  
     island paradises of the Pacific,  
 Populous cities, the latest inventions, the steamers on  
     the rivers, the railroads, with many a thrifty farm,  
     with machinery,  
 And wool and wheat and the grape, and diggings of  
     yellow gold.

## 3

But more in you than these, lands of the Western shore,  
(These but the means, the implements, the standing-  
ground,)

I see in you, certain to come, the promise of thousands  
of years, till now deferr'd,

Promis'd to be fulfill'd, our common kind, the race.

The new society at last, proportionate to Nature,  
In man of you, more than your mountain peaks or  
stalwart trees imperial,

In woman more, far more, than all your gold or vines,  
or even vital air.

Fresh come, to a new world indeed, yet long prepared,  
I see the genius of the modern, child of the real and  
ideal,

Clearing the ground for broad humanity, the true  
America, heir of the past so grand,

To build a grander future.

# A SONG FOR OCCUPATIONS

## 1

A song for occupations !

In the labour of engines and trades and the labour of  
fields I find the developments,  
And find the eternal meanings.

Workmen and Workwomen !

Were all educations practical and ornamental well  
display'd out of me, what would it amount to ?

Were I as the head teacher, charitable proprietor, wise  
statesman, what would it amount to ?

Were I to you as the boss employing and paying you,  
would that satisfy you ?

The learn'd, virtuous, benevolent, and the usual terms,  
A man like me and never the usual terms.

Neither a servant nor a master I,

I take no sooner a large price than a small price, I will  
have my own whoever enjoys me,

I will be even with you and you shall be even with me.

If you stand at work in a shop I stand as high as the  
highest in the same shop,

If you bestow gifts on your brother or dearest friend  
I demand as good as your brother or dearest friend,

If your lover, husband, wife, is welcome by day or  
night, I must be personally as welcome,

If you become degraded, criminal, ill, then I become  
so for your sake,

If you remember your foolish and outlaw'd deeds, do  
you think I cannot remember my own foolish and  
outlaw'd deeds ?

If you carouse at the table I carouse at the opposite  
side of the table,

If you meet some stranger in the streets and love him  
or her, why I often meet strangers in the street  
and love them.

Why what have you thought of yourself ?  
Is it you then that thought yourself less ?  
Is it you that thought the President greater than you ?  
Or the rich better off than you ? or the educated wiser  
than you ?

(Because you are greasy or pimples, or were once  
drunk, or a thief,  
Or that you are diseas'd, or rheumatic, or a prostitute,  
Or from frivolity or impotence, or that you are no  
scholar and never saw your name in print,  
Do you give in that you are any less immortal ?)

## 2

Souls of men and women ! it is not you I call unseen,  
unheard, untouchable and untouching,  
It is not you I go argue pro and con about, and to  
settle whether you are alive or no,  
I own publicly who you are, if nobody else owns.

Grown, half-grown and babe, of this country and every  
country, in-doors and out-doors, one just as much  
as the other, I see,  
And all else behind or through them.

The wife, and she is not one jot less than the husband,  
The daughter, and she is just as good as the son,  
The mother, and she is every bit as much as the father.

Offspring of ignorant and poor, boys apprenticed to  
trades,

Young fellows working on farms and old fellows working  
on farms,

Sailor-men, merchant-men, coasters, immigrants,  
All these I see, but nigher and farther the same I see,  
None shall escape me and none shall wish to escape me.

I bring what you much need yet always have,  
Not money, amours, dress, eating, erudition, but as  
good,

I send no agent or medium, offer no representative of  
value, but offer the value itself.

There is something that comes to one now and perpetually,  
It is not what is printed, preach'd, discussed, it eludes  
discussion and print,  
It is not to be put in a book, it is not in this book,  
It is for you whoever you are, it is no farther from  
you than your hearing and sight are from you,  
It is hinted by nearest, commonest, readiest, it is ever  
provoked by them.

You may read in many languages, yet read nothing  
about it,  
You may read the President's message and read nothing  
about it there,  
Nothing in the reports from the State department or  
Treasury department, or in the daily papers or  
weekly papers,  
Or in the census or revenue returns, prices current, or  
any accounts of stock.

## 3

The sun and stars that float in the open air,  
The apple-shaped earth and we upon it, surely the  
drift of them is something grand,  
I do not know what it is except that it is grand, and  
that it is happiness,  
And that the enclosing purport of us here is not a speculation  
or bon-mot or reconnaissance,  
And that it is not something which by luck may turn  
out well for us, and without luck must be a failure  
for us,  
And not something which may yet be retracted in  
a certain contingency.

The light and shade, the curious sense of body and  
identity, the greed that with perfect complaisance  
devours all things,  
The endless pride and outstretching of man, unspeak-  
able joys and sorrows,  
The wonder every one sees in every one else he sees,

and the wonders that fill each minute of time  
forever,

What have you reckon'd them for, camerado ?

Have you reckon'd them for your trade or farm-work ?  
or for the profits of your store ?

Or to achieve yourself a position ? or to fill a gentle-  
man's leisure, or a lady's leisure ?

Have you reckon'd that the landscape took substance  
and form that it might be painted in a picture ?

Or men and women that they might be written of, and  
songs sung ?

Or the attraction of gravity, and the great laws and  
harmonious combinations and the fluids of the  
air, as subjects for the savans ?

Or the brown land and the blue sea for maps and  
charts ?

Or the stars to be put in constellations and named  
fancy names ?

Or that the growth of seeds is for agricultural tables,  
or agriculture itself ?

Old institutions, these arts, libraries, legends, collec-  
tions, and the practice handed along in manu-  
factures, will we rate them so high ?

Will we rate our cash and business high ? I have no  
objection,

I rate them as high as the highest—then a child born  
of a woman and man I rate beyond all rate.

We thought our Union grand, and our Constitution  
grand,

I do not say they are not grand and good, for they are,  
I am this day just as much in love with them as you,  
Then I am in love with You, and with all my fellows  
upon the earth.

We consider bibles and religions divine—I do not say  
they are not divine,

I say they have all grown out of you, and may grow  
out of you still,

It is not they who give the life, it is you who give the  
life,  
Leaves are not more shed from the trees, or trees from  
the earth, than they are shed out of you.

## 4

The sum of all known reverence I add up in you who-  
ever you are,  
The President is there in the White House for you,  
it is not you who are here for him,  
The Secretaries act in their bureaus for you, not you  
here for them,  
The Congress convenes every Twelfth-month for you,  
Laws, courts, the forming of States, the charters of  
cities, the going and coming of commerce and  
mails, are all for you.

List close my scholars dear,  
Doctrines, politics and civilization exurge from you,  
Sculpture and monuments and any thing inscribed any-  
where are tallied in you,  
The gist of histories and statistics as far back as the  
records reach is in you this hour, and myths and  
tales the same,  
If you were not breathing and walking here, where  
would they all be ?  
The most renown'd poems would be ashes, orations  
and plays would be vacuums.

All architecture is what you do to it when you look  
upon it,  
(Did you think it was in the white or grey stone ? or  
the lines of the arches and cornices ?)

All music is what awakes from you when you are  
reminded by the instruments,  
It is not the violins and the cornets, it is not the oboe  
nor the beating drums, nor the score of the baritone  
singer singing his sweet romanza, nor that of the  
men's chorus, nor that of the women's chorus,  
It is nearer and farther than they.

## 5

Will the whole come back then ?  
Can each see signs of the best by a look in the looking-  
glass ? is there nothing greater or more ?  
Does all sit there with you, with the mystic unseen  
soul ?

Strange and hard that paradox true I give,  
Objects gross and the unseen soul are one.

The men and the work of the men on ferries, railroads,  
coasters, fish-boats, canals ;

The hourly routine of your own or any man's life, the  
shop, yard, store, or factory,

These shows all near you by day and night—workman !  
whoever you are, your daily life !

In that and them the heft of the heaviest—in that  
and them far more than you estimated, (and far  
less also,)

In them realities for you and me, in them poems for  
you and me,

In them, not yourself—you and your soul enclose all  
things, regardless of estimation,

In them the development good—in them all themes,  
hints, possibilities.

I do not affirm that what you see beyond is futile,  
I do not advise you to stop,

I do not say leadings you thought great are not great,  
But I say that none lead to greater than these lead to.

## 6

Will you seek afar off ? you surely come back at  
last,

In things best known to you finding the best, or as  
good as the best,

In folks nearest to you finding the sweetest, strongest,  
lovingest,

Happiness, knowledge, not in another place but this  
place, not for another hour but this hour,



Man in the first you see or touch, always in friend,  
brother, nighest neighbour—woman in mother,  
sister, wife,  
The popular tastes and employments taking precedence  
in poems or anywhere,  
You workwomen and workmen of these States having  
your own divine and strong life,  
And all else giving place to men and women like you.  
When the psalm sings instead of the singer,  
When the script preaches instead of the preacher,  
When the pulpit descends and goes instead of the  
carver that carved the supporting desk,  
When I can touch the body of books by night or by  
day, and when they touch my body back again,  
When a university course convinces like a slumbering  
woman and child convince,  
When the minted gold in the vault smiles like the  
night-watchman's daughter,  
When warrantee deeds loafe in chairs opposite and are  
my friendly companions,  
I intend to reach them my hand, and make as much  
of them as I do of men and women like you.

# A SONG OF THE ROLLING EARTH

## I

A SONG of the rolling earth, and of words according.  
Were you thinking that those were the words, those  
upright lines? those curves, angles, dots?

No, those are not the words, the substantial words are  
in the ground and sea,

They are in the air, they are in you.

Were you thinking that those were the words, those  
delicious sounds out of your friends' mouths?

No, the real words are more delicious than they.

Human bodies are words, myriads of words,

(In the best poems reappears the body, man's or  
woman's, well-shaped, natural, gay,

Every part able, active, receptive, without shame or  
the need of shame.)

Air, soil, water, fire—those are words.

I myself am a word with them—my qualities inter-  
penetrate with theirs—my name is nothing to  
them,

Though it were told in the three thousand languages,  
what would air, soil, water, fire, know of my  
name?

A healthy presence, a friendly or commanding gesture,  
are words, sayings, meanings.

The charms that go with the mere looks of some men  
and women, are sayings and meanings also.

The workmanship of souls is by those inaudible words  
of the earth,

The masters know the earth's words and use them  
more than audible words.

Amelioration is one of the earth's words,

The earth neither lags nor hastens,

## 174 A SONG OF THE ROLLING EARTH

It has all attributes, growths, effects, latent in itself  
from the jump,

It is not half beautiful only, defects and excrescences  
show just as much as perfections show.

The earth does not withhold, it is generous enough,  
The truths of the earth continually wait, they are not  
so conceal'd either,

They are calm, subtle, untransmissible by print,  
They are imbued through all things conveying them-  
selves willingly,

Conveying a sentiment and invitation, I utter and utter,  
I speak not, yet if you hear me not of what avail am  
I to you ?

To bear, to better, lacking these of what avail am I ?

(Accouche ! accouchez !

Will you rot your own fruit in yourself there ?

Will you squat and stifle there ?)

The earth does not argue,  
Is not pathetic, has no arrangements,  
Does not scream, haste, persuade, threaten, promise,  
Makes no discriminations, has no conceivable failures,  
Closes nothing, refuses nothing, shuts none out,  
Of all the powers, objects, states, it notifies, shuts  
none out.

The earth does not exhibit itself nor refuse to exhibit  
itself, possesses still underneath,

Underneath the ostensible sounds, the august chorus  
of heroes, the wail of slaves,

Persuasions of lovers, curses, gasps of the dying,  
laughter of young people, accents of bargainers,

Underneath these possessing words that never fail.

To her children the words of the eloquent dumb great  
mother never fail,

The true words do not fail, for motion does not fail  
and reflection does not fail,

Also the day and night do not fail, and the voyage we  
pursue does not fail.

Of the interminable sisters,  
 Of the ceaseless cotillions of sisters,  
 Of the centripetal and centrifugal sisters, the elder and  
     younger sisters,  
 The beautiful sister we know dances on with the rest.  
 With her ample back towards every beholder,  
 With the fascinations of youth and the equal fascina-  
     tions of age,  
 Sits she whom I too love like the rest, sits undisturb'd,  
 Holding up in her hand what has the character of  
     a mirror, while her eyes glance back from it,  
 Glance as she sits, inviting none, denying none,  
 Holding a mirror day and night tirelessly before her  
     own face.

Seen at hand or seen at a distance,  
 Duly the twenty-four appear in public every day.  
 Duly approach and pass with their companions or a  
     companion,  
 Looking from no countenances of their own, but from  
     the countenances of those who are with them,  
 From the countenances of children or women or the  
     manly countenance,  
 From the open countenances of animals or from inani-  
     mate things,  
 From the landscape or waters or from the exquisite  
     apparition of the sky,  
 From our countenances, mine and yours, faithfully  
     returning them,  
 Every day in public appearing without fail, but never  
     twice with the same companions.

Embracing man, embracing all, proceed the three  
     hundred and sixty-five resistlessly round the sun ;  
 Embracing all, soothing, supporting, follow close three  
     hundred and sixty-five offsets of the first, sure and  
     necessary as they.

Tumbling on steadily, nothing dreading,  
 Sunshine, storm, cold, heat, forever withstanding,  
     passing, carrying,

## 176 A SONG OF THE ROLLING EARTH

The soul's realization and determination still inheriting,  
 The fluid vacuum around and ahead still entering and  
 dividing,  
 No balk retarding, no anchor anchoring, on no rock  
 striking,  
 Swift, glad, content, unbereav'd, nothing losing.  
 Of all able and ready at any time to give strict account,  
 The divine ship sails the divine sea.

### 2

Whoever you are ! motion and reflection are especially  
 for you,  
 The divine ship sails the divine sea for you.

Whoever you are ! you are he or she for whom the  
 earth is solid and liquid,  
 You are he or she for whom the sun and moon hang  
 in the sky,  
 For none more than you are the present and the past,  
 For none more than you is immortality.

Each man to himself and each woman to herself, is  
 the word of the past and present, and the true  
 word of immortality ;  
 No one can acquire for another—not one,  
 Not one can grow for another—not one.

The song is to the singer, and comes back most to  
 him,  
 The teaching is to the teacher, and comes back most  
 to him,  
 The murder is to the murderer, and comes back most  
 to him,  
 The theft is to the thief, and comes back most to him,  
 The love is to the lover, and comes back most to him,  
 The gift is to the giver, and comes back most to him—  
 it cannot fail,  
 The oration is to the orator, the acting is to the actor  
 and actress not to the audience,  
 And no man understands any greatness or goodness  
 but his own, or the indication of his own.

3

I swear the earth shall surely be complete to him or  
her who shall be complete,

The earth remains jagged and broken only to him or  
her who remains jagged and broken.

I swear there is no greatness or power that does not  
emulate those of the earth,

There can be no theory of any account unless it corro-  
borate the theory of the earth,

No politics, song, religion, behaviour, or what not is  
of account, unless it compare with the amplitude  
of the earth,

Unless it face the exactness, vitality, impartiality,  
rectitude of the earth.

I swear I begin to see love with sweeter spasms than  
that which responds love,

It is that which contains itself, which never invites  
and never refuses.

I swear I begin to see little or nothing in audible words,  
All merges toward the presentation of the unspoken  
meanings of the earth,

Toward him who sings the songs of the body and of  
the truths of the earth,

Toward him who makes the dictionaries of words that  
print cannot touch.

I swear I see what is better than to tell the best,  
It is always to leave the best untold.

When I undertake to tell the best I find I cannot,  
My tongue is ineffectual on its pivots,  
My breath will not be obedient to its organs,  
I become a dumb man.

The best of the earth cannot be told anyhow, all or  
any is best,

It is not what you anticipated, it is cheaper, easier,  
nearer,

Things are not dismiss'd from the places they held before,  
The earth is just as positive and direct as it was before,

## 178 A SONG OF THE ROLLING EARTH.

Facts, religions, improvements, politics, trades, are as  
- real as before,  
But the soul is also real, it too is positive and direct,  
No reasoning, no proof has establish'd it,  
Undeniable growth has establish'd it.

### 4

These to echo the tones of souls and the phrases of souls,  
(If they did not echo the phrases of souls what were  
they then ?

If they had not reference to you in especial what were  
they then ?)

I swear I will never henceforth have to do with the  
faith that tells the best,

I will have to do only with that faith that leaves the  
best untold.

Say on, sayers ! sing on, singers !

Delve ! mould ! pile the words of the earth !

Work on, age after age, nothing is to be lost,

It may have to wait long, but it will certainly come in use,  
When the materials are all prepared and ready, the  
architects shall appear.

I swear to you the architects shall appear without fail,  
I swear to you they will understand you and justify you,  
The greatest among them shall be he who best knows  
you, and encloses all and is faithful to all,

He and the rest shall not forget you, they shall perceive  
that you are not an iota less than they,

You shall be fully glorified in them.

## YOUTH, DAY, OLD AGE, AND NIGHT

YOUTH, large, lusty, loving—youth full of grace, force,  
fascination,

Do you know that Old Age may come after you with  
equal grace, force, fascination ?

Day full-blown and splendid—day of the immense sun,  
action, ambition, laughter,

The Night follows close with millions of suns, and sleep  
and restoring darkness.

# BIRDS OF PASSAGE

## SONG OF THE UNIVERSAL

### 1

COME said the Muse,  
Sing me a song no poet yet has chanted,  
Sing me the universal.

In this broad earth of ours,  
Amid the measureless grossness and the slag,  
Enclosed and safe within its central heart,  
Nestles the seed perfection.

By every life a share or more or less,  
None born but it is born, conceal'd or unconceal'd the  
seed is waiting.

### 2

Lo ! keen-eyed towering science,  
As from tall peaks the modern overlooking,  
Successive absolute flats issuing.

Yet again, lo ! the soul, above all science,  
For it has history gather'd like husks around the globe,  
For it the entire star-myrriads roll through the sky.

In spiral routes by long detours,  
(As a much-tacking ship upon the sea,)  
For it the partial to the permanent flowing,  
For it the real to the ideal tends.

For it the mystic evolution,  
Not the right only justified, what we call evil also  
justified.

Forth from their masks, no matter what,  
From the huge festering trunk, from craft and guile  
and tears,  
Health to emerge and joy, joy universal.



Out of the bulk, the morbid and the shallow,  
Out of the bad majority, the varied countless frauds  
    of men and states,  
Electric, antiseptic yet, cleaving, suffusing all,  
Only the good is universal.

## 3

Over the mountain-growths disease and sorrow,  
An uncaught bird is ever hovering, hovering,  
High in the purer, happier air.

From imperfection's murkiest cloud,  
Darts always forth one ray of perfect light,  
One flash of heaven's glory.

To fashion's, custom's discord,  
To the mad Babel-din, the deafening orgies,  
Soothing each lull a strain is heard, just heard,  
From some far shore the final chorus sounding.

O the blest eyes, the happy hearts,  
That see, that know the guiding thread so fine,  
Along the mighty labyrinth.

## 4

And thou America,  
For the scheme's culmination, its thought and its  
    reality,  
For these (not for thyself) thou hast arrived.

Thou too surroundest all,  
Embracing carrying welcoming all, thou too by path-  
    ways broad and new,  
To the ideal tendest.

The measur'd faiths of other lands, the grandeurs of  
    the past,  
Are not for thee, but grandeurs of thine own,  
Deific faiths and amplitudes, absorbing, comprehending  
    all,  
All eligible to all.

All, all for immortality,  
Love like the light silently wrapping all,  
Nature's amelioration blessing all,  
The blossoms, fruits of ages, orchards divine and certain,  
Forms, objects, growths, humanities, to spiritual images  
ripening.

Give me O God to sing that thought,  
Give me, give him or her I love this quenchless faith,  
In Thy ensemble, whatever else withheld withhold not  
from us,

Belief in plan of Thee enclosed in Time and Space,  
Health, peace, salvation universal.

Is it a dream ?

Nay but the lack of it the dream,  
And failing it life's lore and wealth a dream,  
And all the world a dream.

### PIONEERS ! O PIONEERS !

COME my tan-faced children,  
Follow well in order, get your weapons ready,  
Have you your pistols ? have you your sharp-edged  
axes ?

Pioneers ! O pioneers !

For we cannot tarry here,  
We must march my darlings, we must bear the brunt  
of danger,

We the youthful sinewy races, all the rest on us depend,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !

O you youths, Western youths,  
So impatient, full of action, full of manly pride and  
friendship,

Plain I see you Western youths, see you tramping with  
the foremost,

Pioneers ! O pioneers !

Have the elder races halted ?  
Do they droop and end their lesson, wearied over there  
beyond the seas ?

We take up the task eternal, and the burden and the  
lesson,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !

All the past we leave behind,  
We debouch upon a newer mightier world, varied world,  
Fresh and strong the world we seize, world of labour  
and the march,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !

We detachments steady throwing,  
Down the edges, through the passes, up the mountains  
steep,  
Conquering, holding, daring, venturing as we go the  
unknown ways,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !

We primaeval forests felling,  
We the rivers stemming, vexing we and piercing deep  
the mines within,  
We the surface broad surveying, we the virgin soil  
upheaving,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !

Colorado men are we,  
From the peaks gigantic, from the great sierras and  
the high plateaus,  
From the mine and from the gully, from the hunting  
trail we come,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !

From Nebraska, from Arkansas,  
Central inland race are we, from Missouri, with the  
continental blood intervein'd,  
All the hands of comrades clasping, all the Southern,  
all the Northern,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !

O resistless restless race !  
O beloved race in all ! O my breast aches with tender  
love for all !  
O I mourn and yet exult, I am rapt with love for all,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !

Raise the mighty mother mistress,  
Waving high the delicate mistress, over all the starry  
mistress, (bend your heads all,)  
Raise the fang'd and warlike mistress, stern, impassive,  
weapon'd mistress,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !

See my children, resolute children,  
By those swarms upon our rear we must never yield  
or falter,  
Ages back in ghostly millions frowning there behind  
us urging,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !

On and on the compact ranks,  
With accessions ever waiting, with the places of the  
dead quickly fill'd,  
Through the battle, through defeat, moving yet and  
never stopping,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !

O to die advancing on !  
Are there some of us to droop and die ? has the hour  
come ?  
Then upon the march we fittest die, soon and sure the  
gap is fill'd,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !

All the pulses of the world,  
Falling in they beat for us, with the Western movement  
beat,  
Holding single or together, steady moving to the front,  
all for us,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !

Life's involv'd and varied pageants,  
All the forms and shows, all the workmen at their work,  
All the seamen and the landmen, all the masters with  
their slaves,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !

All the hapless silent lovers,  
All the prisoners in the prisons, all the righteous and  
the wicked,

All the joyous, all the sorrowing, all the living, all the  
dying,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !

I too with my soul and body,  
We, a curious trio, picking, wandering on our way,  
Through these shores amid the shadows, with the  
apparitions pressing,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !

Lo, the darting bowling orb !  
Lo, the brother orbs around, all the clustering suns  
and planets,  
All the dazzling days, all the mystic nights with dreams,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !

These are of us, they are with us,  
All for primal needed work, while the followers there  
in embryo wait behind,  
We to-day's procession heading, we the route for travel  
clearing,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !

O you daughters of the West !  
O you young and elder daughters ! O you mothers  
and you wives !  
Never must you be divided, in our ranks you move  
united,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !

Minstrels latent on the prairies !  
(Shrouded bards of other lands, you may rest, you have  
done your work,)  
Soon I hear you coming warbling, soon you rise and  
tramp amid us,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !

Not for delectations sweet,  
Not the cushion and the slipper, not the peaceful and  
the studious,  
Not the riches safe and palling, not for us the tame  
enjoyment,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !

Do the feasters gluttonous feast ?  
 Do the corpulent sleepers sleep ? have they lock'd and  
 bolted doors ?  
 Still be ours the diet hard, and the blanket on the  
 ground,  
 Pioneers ! O pioneers !

Has the night descended ?  
 Was the road of late so toilsome ? did we stop dis-  
 couraged nodding on our way ?  
 Yet a passing hour I yield you in your tracks to pause  
 oblivious,  
 Pioneers ! O pioneers !

Till with sound of trumpet,  
 Far, far off the daybreak call—hark ! how loud and  
 clear I hear it wind,  
 Swift ! to the head of the army !—swift ! spring to  
 your places,  
 Pioneers ! O pioneers !

### TO YOU

WHOEVER you are, I fear you are walking the walks  
 of dreams,  
 I fear these supposed realities are to melt from under  
 your feet and hands,  
 Even now your features, joys, speech, house, trade,  
 manners, troubles, follies, costume, crimes, dissi-  
 pate away from you,  
 Your true soul and body appear before me,  
 They stand forth out of affairs, out of commerce, shops,  
 work, farms, clothes, the house, buying, selling,  
 eating, drinking, suffering, dying,  
 Whoever you are, now I place my hand upon you,  
 that you be my poem,  
 I whisper with my lips close to your ear,  
 I have loved many women and men, but I love none  
 better than you.  
 O I have been dilatory and dumb,  
 I should have made my way straight to you long ago,

I should have blabb'd nothing but you, I should have  
chanted nothing but you.

I will leave all and come and make the hymns of you,  
None has understood you, but I understand you,  
None has done justice to you, you have not done justice  
to yourself,

None but has found you imperfect, I only find no  
imperfection in you,

None but would subordinate you, I only am he who  
will never consent to subordinate you,

I only am he who places over you no master, owner,  
better, God, beyond what waits intrinsically in  
yourself.

Painters have painted their swarming groups and the  
centre-figure of all,

From the head of the centre-figure spreading a nimbus  
of gold-colour'd light,

But I paint myriads of heads, but paint no head with-  
out its nimbus of gold-colour'd light,

From my hand from the brain of every man and woman  
it streams, effulgently flowing forever.

O I could sing such grandeurs and glories about you !  
You have not known what you are, you have slumber'd  
upon yourself all your life,

Your eyelids have been the same as closed most of the  
time,

What you have done returns already in mockeries,  
(Your thrift, knowledge, prayers, if they do not return  
in mockeries, what is their return ?)

The mockeries are not you,  
Underneath them and within them I see you lurk,  
I pursue you where none else has pursued you,  
Silence, the desk, the flippant expression, the night,  
the accustom'd routine, if these conceal you from  
others or from yourself, they do not conceal you  
from me,

The shaved face, the unsteady eye, the impure com-  
plexion, if these balk others they do not balk me,

The pert apparel, the deform'd attitude, drunkenness,  
greed, premature death, all these I part aside.

There is no endowment in man or woman that is not  
tallied in you,

There is no virtue, no beauty in man or woman, but  
as good is in you,

No pluck, no endurance in others, but as good is in you,

No pleasure waiting for others, but an equal pleasure  
waits for you.

As for me, I give nothing to any one except I give  
the like carefully to you,

I sing the songs of the glory of none, not God, sooner  
than I sing the songs of the glory of you.

Whoever you are ! claim your own at any hazard !

These shows of the East and West are tame compared  
to you,

These immense meadows, these interminable rivers,  
you are immense and interminable as they,

These furies, elements, storms, motions of Nature,  
throes of apparent dissolution, you are he or she  
who is master or mistress over them,

Master or mistress in your own right over Nature,  
elements, pain, passion, dissolution.

The hobbles fall from your ankles, you find an unfailing  
sufficiency,

Old or young, male or female, rude, low, rejected by  
the rest, whatever you are promulges itself,

Through birth, life, death, burial, the means are pro-  
vided, nothing is scantied,

Through angers, losses, ambition, ignorance, ennui,  
what you are picks its way.

### MYSELF AND MINE

MYSELF and mine gymnastic ever,

To stand the cold or heat, to take good aim with a gun,  
to sail a boat, to manage horses, to beget superb  
children,



To speak readily and clearly, to feel at home among  
common people,  
And to hold our own in terrible positions on land and  
sea.

Not for an embroiderer,  
(There will always be plenty of embroiderers, I welcome  
them also,)  
But for the fibre of things and for inherent men and  
women.

Not to chisel ornaments,  
But to chisel with free stroke the heads and limbs of  
plenteous supreme Gods, that the States may  
realize them walking and talking.

Let me have my own way,  
Let others promulge the laws, I will make no account  
of the laws,  
Let others praise eminent men and hold up peace,  
I hold up agitation and conflict,  
I praise no eminent man, I rebuke to his face the one  
that was thought most worthy.

(Who are you ? and what are you secretly guilty of  
all your life ?  
Will you turn aside all your life ? will you grub and  
chatter all your life ?  
And who are you, blabbing by rote, years, pages,  
languages, reminiscences,  
Unwitting to-day that you do not know how to speak  
properly a single word ?)

Let others finish specimens, I never finish specimens,  
I start them by exhaustless laws as Nature does, fresh  
and modern continually.

I give nothing as duties,  
What others give as duties I give as living impulses,  
(Shall I give the heart's action as a duty ?)

Let others dispose of questions, I dispose of nothing,  
I arouse unanswerable questions,  
Who are they I see and touch, and what about them ?

What about these likes of myself that draw me so close  
by tender directions and indirections ?

I call to the world to distrust the accounts of my friends,  
but listen to my enemies, as I myself do,

I charge you forever reject those who would expound  
me, for I cannot expound myself,

I charge that there be no theory or school founded out  
of me,

I charge you to leave all free, as I have left all free.

After me, vista !

O I see life is not short, but immeasurably long,

I henceforth tread the world chaste, temperate, an  
early riser, a steady grower,

Every hour the semen of centuries, and still of centuries.

I must follow up these continual lessons of the air,  
water, earth,

I perceive I have no time to lose.

## YEAR OF METEORS

(1859-60)

YEAR of meteors ! brooding year !

I would bind in words retrospective some of your deeds  
and signs,

I would sing your contest for the 19th Presidentiad,

I would sing how an old man, tall, with white hair,  
mounted the scaffold in Virginia,

(I was at hand, silent I stood with teeth shut close,  
I watch'd,

I stood very near you old man when cool and indifferent,  
but trembling with age and your unheal'd wounds  
you mounted the scaffold ;)

I would sing in my copious song your census returns  
of the States,

The tables of population and products, I would sing  
of your ships and their cargoes,

The proud black ships of Manhattan arriving, some  
fill'd with immigrants, some from the isthmus with  
cargoes of gold,

Songs thereof would I sing, to all that hitherward  
 comes would I welcome give,  
 And you would I sing, fair stripling ! welcome to you  
 from me, young prince of England !  
 (Remember you surging Manhattan's crowds as you  
 pass'd with your cortège of nobles ?  
 There in the crowds stood I, and singled you out with  
 attachment ;)

Nor forget I to sing of the wonder, the ship as she  
 swam up my bay,  
 Well-shaped and stately the Great Eastern swam up  
 my bay, she was 600 feet long,  
 Her moving swiftly surrounded by myriads of small  
 craft I forget not to sing ;  
 Nor the comet that came unannounced out of the north  
 flaring in heaven,  
 Nor the strange huge meteor-procession dazzling and  
 clear shooting over our heads,  
 (A moment, a moment long it sail'd its balls of un-  
 earthly light over our heads,  
 Then departed, dropt in the night, and was gone ;)

Of such, and fitful as they, I sing—with gleams from  
 them would I gleam and patch these chants,  
 Your chants, O year all mottled with evil and good—  
 year of forebodings !  
 Year of comets and meteors transient and strange—  
 lo ! even here one equally transient and strange !  
 As I flit through you hastily, soon to fall and be gone,  
 what is this chant,  
 What am I myself but one of your meteors ?

### WITH ANTECEDENTS

#### 1

WITH antecedents,  
 With my fathers and mothers and the accumulations  
 of past ages,  
 With all which, had it not been, I would not now be  
 here, as I am,  
 With Egypt, India, Phenicia, Greece and Rome,

With the Kelt, the Scandinavian, the Alb and the  
Saxon,  
With antique maritime ventures, laws, artisanship,  
wars and journeys,  
With the poet, the skald, the saga, the myth, and the  
oracle,  
With the sale of slaves, with enthusiasts, with the  
troubadour, the crusader, and the monk,  
With those old continents whence we have come to  
this new continent,  
With the fading kingdoms and kings over there,  
With the fading religions and priests,  
With the small shores we look back to from our own  
large and present shores,  
With countless years drawing themselves onward and  
arrived at these years,  
You and me arrived—America arrived and making  
this year,  
This year! sending itself ahead countless years to  
come.

## 2

O but it is not the years—it is I, it is You,  
We touch all laws and tally all antecedents,  
We are the skald, the oracle, the monk and the knight,  
we easily include them and more,  
We stand amid time beginningless and endless. we  
stand amid evil and good,  
All swings around us, there is as much darkness as light,  
The very sun swings itself and its system of planets  
around us,  
Its sun, and its again, all swing around us.

As for me, (torn, stormy, amid these vehement days,)  
I have the idea of all, and am all and believe in all,  
I believe materialism is true and spiritualism is true,  
I reject no part.

(Have I forgotten any part? any thing in the past?  
Come to me whoever and whatever, till I give you  
recognition.)

I respect Assyria, China, Teutonia, and the Hebrews,  
I adopt each theory, myth, god, and demi-god,  
I see that the old accounts, bibles, genealogies, are  
true, without exception,  
I assert that all past days were what they must have  
been,  
And that they could no-how have been better than  
they were,  
And that to-day is what it must be, and that America is,  
And that to-day and America could no-how be better  
than they are.

## 3

In the name of these States and in your and my name,  
the Past,  
And in the name of these States and in your and my  
name, the Present time.  
I know that the past was great and the future will  
be great,  
And I know that both curiously conjoint in the present  
time,  
(For the sake of him I typify, for the common average  
man's sake, your sake if you are he,)  
And that where I am or you are this present day,  
there is the centre of all days, all races,  
And there is the meaning to us of all that has ever  
come of races and days, or ever will come.

# A BROADWAY PAGEANT

## 1

OVER the Western sea hither from Nippon come,  
Courteous, the swart-cheek'd two-sworded envoys,  
Leaning back in their open barouches, bare-headed,  
    impassive,  
Ride to-day through Manhattan.  
Libertad ! I do not know whether others behold what  
    I behold,  
In the procession along with the nobles of Nippon, the  
    errand-bearers,  
Bringing up the rear, hovering above, around, or in  
    the ranks marching,  
But I will sing you a song of what I behold Libertad.  
When million-footed Manhattan unpent descends to  
    her pavements,  
When the thunder-cracking guns arouse me with the  
    proud roar I love,  
When the round-mouth'd guns out of the smoke and  
    smell I love spit their salutes,  
When the fire-flashing guns have fully alerted me, and  
    heaven-clouds canopy my city with a delicate thin  
    haze,  
When gorgeous the countless straight stems, the forests  
    at the wharves, thicken with colours,  
When every ship richly drest carries her flag at the  
    peak,  
When pennants trail and street-festoons hang from the  
    windows,  
When Broadway is entirely given up to foot-passengers  
    and foot-standers, when the mass is densest,  
When the façades of the houses are alive with people,  
    when eyes gaze riveted tens of thousands at a time,  
When the guests from the islands advance, when the  
    pageant moves forward visible,

When the summons is made, when the answer that  
waited thousands of years answers,  
I too arising, answering, descend to the pavements,  
merge with the crowd, and gaze with them.

## 2

Superb-faced Manhattan !  
Comrade Americanos ! to us, then at last the Orient  
comes.

To us, my city,  
Where our tall-topt marble and iron beauties range on  
opposite sides, to walk in the space between,  
To-day our Antipodes comes.

The Originatress comes,  
The nest of languages, the bequeather of poems, the  
race of eld,  
Florid with blood, pensive, rapt with musings, hot with  
passion,  
Sultry with perfume, with ample and flowing garments,  
With sunburnt visage, with intense soul and glittering  
eyes,

The race of Brahma comes.

See my cantabile ! these and more are flashing to us  
from the procession,  
As it moves changing, a kaleidoscope divine it moves  
changing before us.

For not the envoys nor the tann'd Japanee from his  
island only,

Lithe and silent the Hindoo appears, the Asiatic con-  
tinent itself appears, the past, the dead,

The murky night-morning of wonder and fable inscrut-  
able,

The envelop'd mysteries, the old and unknown hive-  
bees,

The north, the sweltering south, eastern Assyria, the  
Hebrews, the ancient of ancients,

Vast desolated cities, the gliding present, all of these  
and more are in the pageant-procession.

Geography, the world, is in it,  
The Great Sea, the brood of islands, Polynesia, the  
coast beyond,  
The coast you henceforth are facing—you Libertad !  
from your Western golden shores,  
The countries there with their populations, the millions  
en-masse are curiously here,  
The swarming market-places, the temples with idols  
ranged along the sides or at the end, bonze,  
brahmin, and llama,  
Mandarin, farmer, merchant, mechanic, and fisherman,  
The singing-girl and the dancing-girl, the ecstatic persons,  
the secluded emperors,  
Confucius himself, the great poets and heroes, the  
warriors, the castes, all,  
Trooping up, crowding from all directions, from the  
Altay mountains,  
From Thibet, from the four winding and far-flowing  
rivers of China,  
From the southern peninsulas and the demi-continental  
islands, from Malaysia,  
These and whatever belongs to them palpable show  
forth to me, and are seiz'd by me,  
And I am seiz'd by them, and friendlily held by them,  
Till as here them all I chant, Libertad ! for themselves  
and for you.

For I too raising my voice join the ranks of this pageant,  
I am the chanter, I chant aloud over the pageant,  
I chant the world on my Western sea,  
I chant copious the islands beyond, thick as stars in  
the sky,  
I chant the new empire grander than any before, as  
in a vision it comes to me,  
I chant America the mistress, I chant a greater  
supremacy,  
I chant projected a thousand blooming cities yet in  
time on those groups of sea-islands,  
My sail-ships and steam-ships threading the archi-  
pelagoes,



My stars and stripes fluttering in the wind,  
Commerce opening, the sleep of ages having done its  
work, races reborn, refresh'd,  
Lives, works resumed—the object I know not—but the  
old, the Asiatic renew'd as it must be,  
Commencing from this day surrounded by the world.

## 3

And you Libertad of the world !  
You shall sit in the middle well-pois'd thousands and  
thousands of years,  
As to-day from one side the nobles of Asia come to you,  
As to-morrow from the other side the queen of England  
sends her eldest son to you.

The sign is reversing, the orb is enclosed,  
The ring is circled, the journey is done,  
The box-lid is but perceptibly open'd, nevertheless the  
perfume pours copiously out of the whole box.

Young Libertad ! with the venerable Asia, the all-  
mother,  
Be considerate with her now and ever hot Libertad,  
for you are all,  
Bend your proud neck to the long-off mother now  
sending messages over the archipelagoes to you,  
Bend your proud neck low for once, young Libertad.

Were the children straying westward so long ? so wide  
the tramping ?

Were the precedent dim ages debouching westward  
from Paradise so long ?

Were the centuries steadily footing it that way, all  
the while unknown, for you, for reasons ?

They are justified, they are accomplish'd, they shall  
now be turn'd the other way also, to travel toward  
you thence,

They shall now also march obediently eastward for  
your sake Libertad.

## SEA-DRIFT

### OUT OF THE CRADLE ENDLESSLY ROCKING

Out of the cradle endlessly rocking,  
Out of the mocking-bird's throat, the musical shuttle,  
Out of the Ninth-month midnight,  
Over the sterile sands and the fields beyond, where  
the child leaving his bed wander'd alone, bare-  
headed, barefoot,  
Down from the shower'd halo,  
Up from the mystic play of shadows twining and  
twisting as if they were alive,  
Out from the patches of briars and blackberries,  
From the memories of the bird that chanted to me,  
From your memories sad brother, from the fitful risings  
and fallings I heard,  
From under that yellow half-moon late-risen and  
swollen as if with tears,  
From those beginning notes of yearning and love there  
in the mist,  
From the thousand responses of my heart never to cease,  
From the myriad thence-arous'd words,  
From the word stronger and more delicious than any,  
From such as now they start the scene revisiting,  
As a flock, twittering, rising, or overhead passing,  
Borne hither, ere all eludes me, hurriedly,  
A man, yet by these tears a little boy again,  
Throwing myself on the sand, confronting the waves,  
I, chanter of pains and joys, uniter of here and here-  
after,  
Taking all hints to use them, but swiftly leaping beyond  
them,  
A reminiscence sing.

Once Paumanok,  
When the lilac-scent was in the air and Fifth-month  
grass was growing,

Up this seashore in some briers,  
Two feather'd guests from Alabama, two together,  
And their nest, and four light-green eggs spotted with  
brown,  
And every day the he-bird to and fro near at hand,  
And every day the she-bird crouch'd on her nest, silent,  
with bright eyes,  
And every day I, a curious boy, never too close, never  
disturbing them,  
Cautiously peering, absorbing, translating.

*Shine ! shine ! shine !*

*Pour down your warmth, great sun !*

*While we bask, we two together.*

*Two together !*

*Winds blow south, or winds blow north,*

*Day come white, or night come black,*

*Home, or rivers and mountains from home,*

*Singing all time, minding no time,*

*While we two keep together.*

Till of a sudden,

Maybe kill'd, unknown to her mate,

One forenoon the she-bird crouch'd not on the nest,

Nor return'd that afternoon, nor the next,

Nor ever appear'd again.

And thenceforward all summer in the sound of the sea,  
And at night under the full of the moon in calmer  
weather,

Over the hoarse surging of the sea,

Or flitting from brier to brier by day,

I saw, I heard at intervals the remaining one, the  
he-bird,

The solitary guest from Alabama.

*Blow ! blow ! blow !*

*Blow up sea-winds along Paumanok's shore ;*

*I wait and I wait till you blow my mate to me.*

Yes, when the stars glisten'd,

All night long on the prong of a moss-scallop'd  
stake,

Down almost amid the slapping waves,  
Sat the lone singer wonderful causing tears.

He call'd on his mate,  
He pour'd forth the meanings which I of all men know.

Yes my brother I know,  
The rest might not, but I have treasur'd every note,  
For more than once dimly down to the beach gliding,  
Silent, avoiding the moonbeams, blending myself with  
the shadows,  
Recalling now the obscure shapes, the echoes, the  
sounds and sights after their sorts,  
The white arms out in the breakers tirelessly tossing,  
I, with bare feet, a child, the wind wafting my hair,  
Listen'd long and long.

Listen'd to keep, to sing, now translating the notes,  
Following you my brother.

*Soothe ! soothe ! soothe !  
Close on its wave soothes the wave behind,  
And again another behind embracing and lapping, every  
one close,  
But my love soothes not me, not me.*

*Low hangs the moon, it rose late,  
It is lagging—O I think it is heavy with love, with love.*

*O madly the sea pushes upon the land,  
With love, with love.*

*O night ! do I not see my love fluttering out among the  
breakers ?  
What is that little black thing I see there in the white ?*

*Loud ! loud ! loud !  
Loud I call to you, my love !  
High and clear I shoot my voice over the waves,  
Surely you must know who is here, is here,  
You must know who I am, my love.*

*Low-hanging moon !  
What is that dusky spot in your brown yellow ?*

*O it is the shape, the shape of my mate !  
O moon do not keep her from me any longer.*

*Land ! land ! O land !*

*Whichever way I turn, O I think you could give me my  
mate back again if you only would,  
For I am almost sure I see her dimly whichever way I look.*

*O rising stars !*

*Perhaps the one I want so much will rise, will rise with  
some of you.*

*O throat ! O trembling throat !*

*Sound clearer through the atmosphere !*

*Pierce the woods, the earth,*

*Somewhere listening to catch you must be the one I want.*

*Shake out carols !*

*Solitary here, the night's carols !*

*Carols of lonesome love ! death's carols !*

*Carols under that lagging, yellow, waning moon !*

*O under that moon where she droops almost down into  
the sea !*

*O reckless despairing carols.*

*But soft ! sink low !*

*Soft ! let me just murmur,*

*And do you wait a moment you husky-nois'd sea,*

*For somewhere I believe I heard my mate responding to me,*

*So faint, I must be still, be still to listen,*

*But not altogether still, for then she might not come  
immediately to me.*

*Hither my love !*

*Here I am ! here !*

*With this just-sustain'd note I announce myself to you,  
This gentle call is for you my love, for you.*

*Do not be decoy'd elsewhere,*

*That is the whistle of the wind, it is not my voice,*

*That is the fluttering, the fluttering of the spray,*

*Those are the shadows of leaves.*

*O darkness ! O in vain !*

*O I am very sick and sorrowful.*

*O brown halo in the sky near the moon, drooping upon  
the sea !*

*O troubled reflection in the sea !*

*O throat ! O throbbing heart !*

*And I singing uselessly, uselessly all the night.*

*O past ! O happy life ! O songs of joy !*

*In the air, in the woods, over fields,*

*Loved ! loved ! loved ! loved ! loved !*

*But my mate no more, no more with me !*

*We two together no more.*

The aria sinking,

All else continuing, the stars shining,

The winds blowing, the notes of the bird continuous  
echoing,

With angry moans the fierce old mother incessantly  
moaning,

On the sands of Paumanok's shore grey and rustling,

The yellow half-moon enlarged, sagging down, droop-  
ing, the face of the sea almost touching,

The boy ecstatic, with his bare feet the waves, with  
his hair the atmosphere dallying,

The love in the heart long pent, now loose, now at last  
tumultuously bursting,

The aria's meaning, the ears, the soul, swiftly deposit-  
ing,

The strange tears down the cheeks coursing,

The colloquy there, the trio, each uttering,

The undertone, the savage old mother incessantly  
crying,

To the boy's soul's questions sullenly timing, some  
drown'd secret hissing,

To the outsetting bard.

Demon or bird ! (said the boy's soul,)

Is it indeed toward your mate you sing ? or is it really  
to me ?

For I, that was a child, my tongue's use sleeping, now  
I have heard you,

Now in a moment I know what I am for, I awake,

And already a thousand singers, a thousand songs,  
clearer, louder and more sorrowful than yours,  
A thousand warbling echoes have started to life within  
me, never to die.

O you singer solitary, singing by yourself, projecting me,  
O solitary me listening, never more shall I cease per-  
petuating you,  
Never more shall I escape, never more the reverbera-  
tions,  
Never more the cries of unsatisfied love be absent from  
me,  
Never again leave me to be the peaceful child I was  
before what there in the night,  
By the sea under the yellow and sagging moon,  
The messenger there arous'd, the fire, the sweet hell  
within,  
The unknown want, the destiny of me.

O give me the clew ! (it lurks in the night here some-  
where,)

O if I am to have so much, let me have more !

A word then, (for I will conquer it,)  
The word final, superior to all,  
Subtle, sent up—what is it ?—I listen ;  
Are you whispering it, and have been all the time, you  
sea-waves ?

Is that it from your liquid rims and wet sands ?

Wheretof answering, the sea,  
Delaying not, hurrying not,  
Whisper'd me through the night, and very plainly  
before daybreak,

Lisp'd to me the low and delicious word death,  
And again death, death, death, death,  
Hissing melodious, neither like the bird nor like my  
arous'd child's heart,

But edging near as privately for me rustling at my feet,  
Creeping thence steadily up to my ears and laving me  
softly all over,

Death, death, death, death, death.

Which I do not forget,  
But fuse the song of my dusky demon and brother,  
That he sang to me in the moonlight on Paumanok's  
    grey beach,  
With the thousand responsive songs at random,  
My own songs awaked from that hour,  
And with them the key, the word up from the waves,  
The work of the sweetest song and all songs,  
That strong and delicious word which, creeping to my  
    feet,  
(Or like some old crone rocking the cradle, swathed in  
    sweet garments, bending aside,)  
The sea whisper'd me.

## AS I EBB'D WITH THE OCEAN OF LIFE

## 1

As I ebb'd with the ocean of life,  
As I wended the shores I know,  
As I walk'd where the ripples continually wash you  
    Paumanok,  
Where they rustle up hoarse and sibilant,  
Where the fierce old mother endlessly cries for her  
    castaways,  
I musing late in the autumn day, gazing off southward,  
Held by this electric self out of the pride of which I utter  
    poems,  
Was seiz'd by the spirit that trails in the lines under-  
    foot,  
The rim, the sediment that stands for all the water and  
    all the land of the globe.  
Fascinated, my eyes reverting from the south, dropt,  
    to follow those slender windrows,  
Chaff, straw, splinters of wood, weeds, and the sea-  
    gluten,  
Scum, scales from shining rocks, leaves of salt-lettuce,  
    left by the tide,  
Miles walking, the sound of breaking waves the other  
    side of me,



Paumanok there and then as I thought the old thought  
of likenesses,  
These you presented to me you fish-shaped island,  
As I wended the shores I know,  
As I walk'd with that electric self seeking types.

## 2

As I wend to the shores I know not,  
As I list to the dirge, the voices of men and women  
wreck'd,  
As I inhale the impalpable breezes that set in upon  
me,  
As the ocean so mysterious rolls toward me closer and  
closer,  
I too but signify at the utmost a little wash'd-up drift,  
A few sands and dead leaves to gather,  
Gather, and merge myself as part of the sands and  
drift.

O baffled, balk'd, bent to the very earth,  
Oppress'd with myself that I have dared to open my  
mouth,  
Aware now that amid all that blab whose echoes recoil  
upon me I have not once had the least idea who or  
what I am,  
But that before all my arrogant poems the real Me stands  
yet untouch'd, untold, altogether unreach'd,  
Withdrawn far, mocking me with mock-congratulatory  
signs and bows,  
With peals of distant ironical laughter at every word  
I have written,  
Pointing in silence to these songs, and then to the sand  
beneath.

I perceive I have not really understood any thing, not  
a single object, and that no man ever can,  
Nature here in sight of the sea taking advantage of me  
to dart upon me and sting me,  
Because I have dared to open my mouth to sing at  
all.

## 3

You oceans both, I close with you,  
We murmur alike reproachfully rolling sands and drift,  
    knowing not why,  
These little shreds indeed standing for you and me  
    and all.

You friable shore with trails of débris,  
You fish-shaped island, I take what is underfoot,  
What is yours is mine my father.

I too Paumanok,  
I too have bubbled up, floated the measureless float,  
    and been wash'd on your shores,  
I too am but a trail of drift and débris,  
I too leave little wrecks upon you, you fish-shaped  
    island.

I throw myself upon your breast my father,  
I cling to you so that you cannot unloose me,  
I hold you so firm till you answer me something.

Kiss me my father,  
Touch me with your lips as I touch those I love,  
Breathe to me while I hold you close the secret of the  
    murmuring I envy.

## 4

Ebb, ocean of life, (the flow will return,)  
Cease not your moaning you fierce old mother,  
Endlessly cry for your castaways, but fear not, deny  
    not me,  
Rustle not up so hoarse and angry against my feet as  
    I touch you or gather from you.

I mean tenderly by you and all,  
I gather for myself and for this phantom looking down  
    where we lead, and following me and mine.

Me and mine, loose windrows, little corpses,  
Froth, snowy white, and bubbles,  
(See, from my dead lips the ooze exuding at last,  
See, the prismatic colours glistening and rolling,

Tufts of straw, sands, fragments,  
 Buoy'd hither from many moods, one contradicting  
     another,  
 From the storm, the long calm, the darkness, the swell,  
 Musing, pondering, a breath, a briny tear, a dab of  
     liquid or soil,  
 Up just as much out of fathomless workings fermented  
     and thrown  
 A limp blossom or two, torn, just as much over waves  
     floating, drifted at random,  
 Just as much for us that sobbing dirge of Nature,  
 Just as much whence we come that blare of the cloud-  
     trumpets,  
 We, capricious, brought hither we know not whence,  
     spread out before you,  
 You up there walking or sitting,  
 Whoever you are, we too lie in drifts at your feet.

### TEARS

TEARS ! tears ! tears !  
 In the night, in solitude, tears,  
 On the white shore dripping, dripping, suck'd in by the  
     sand,  
 Tears, not a star shining, all dark and desolate,  
 Moist tears from the eyes of a muffled head ;  
 O who is that ghost ? that form in the dark, with tears ?  
 What shapeless lump is that, bent, crouch'd there on  
     the sand ?  
 Streaming tears, sobbing tears, throes, choked with  
     wild cries ;  
 O storm, embodied, rising, careering with swift steps  
     along the beach !  
 O wild and dismal night storm, with wind—O belching  
     and desperate !  
 O shade so sedate and decorous by day, with calm  
     countenance and regulated pace,  
 But away at night as you fly, none looking—O then the  
     unloosen'd ocean,  
 Of tears ! tears ! tears !

## TO THE MAN-OF-WAR BIRD

THOU who hast slept all night upon the storm,  
 Waking renew'd on thy prodigious pinions,  
 (Burst the wild storm ? above it thou ascended'st,  
 And rested on the sky, thy slave that cradled thee,)  
 Now a blue point, far, far in heaven floating,  
 As to the light emerging here on deck I watch thee,  
 (Myself a speck, a point on the world's floating vast.)

Far, far at sea,  
 After the night's fierce drifts have strewn the shore with  
 wrecks,

With reappearing day as now so happy and serene,  
 The rosy and elastic dawn, the flashing sun,  
 The limpid spread of air cerulean,  
 Thou also reappearest.

Thou born to match the gale, (thou art all wings,)  
 To cope with heaven and earth and sea and hurricane,  
 Thou ship of air that never furl'st thy sails,  
 Days, even weeks untired and onward, through spaces,  
 realms gyrating,

At dusk that look'st on Senegal, at morn America,  
 That sport'st amid the lightning-flash and thunder-  
 cloud,

In them, in thy experiences, had'st thou my soul,  
 What joys ! what joys were thine !



## ABOARD AT A SHIP'S HELM

ABOARD at a ship's helm,  
 A young steersman steering with care.  
 Through fog on a sea-coast dolefully ringing,  
 An ocean-bell—O a warning bell, rock'd by the waves.  
 O you give good notice indeed, you bell by the sea-reefs  
 ringing,  
 Ringing, ringing, to warn the ship from its wreck-place.  
 For as on the alert O steersman, you mind the loud  
 admonition,

The bows turn, the freighted ship tacking speeds away  
under her grey sails,  
The beautiful and noble ship with all her precious  
wealth speeds away gaily and safe.  
But O the ship, the immortal ship ! O ship aboard the  
ship !  
Ship of the body, ship of the soul, voyaging, voyaging,  
voyaging.

## ON THE BEACH AT NIGHT

ON the beach at night,  
Stands a child with her father,  
Watching the east, the autumn sky.  
Up through the darkness,  
While ravening clouds, the burial clouds, in black  
masses spreading,  
Lower sullen and fast athwart and down the sky,  
Amid a transparent clear belt of ether yet left in the  
east,  
Ascends large and calm the lord-star Jupiter,  
And nigh at hand, only a very little above,  
Swim the delicate sisters the Pleiades.  
From the beach the child holding the hand of her  
father,  
Those burial-clouds that lower victorious soon to devour  
all,  
Watching, silently weeps.  
Weep not, child,  
Weep not, my darling,  
With these kisses let me remove your tears,  
The ravening clouds shall not long be victorious,  
They shall not long possess the sky, they devour the  
stars only in apparition,  
Jupiter shall emerge, be patient, watch again another  
night, the Pleiades shall emerge,  
They are immortal, all those stars both silvery and  
golden shall shine out again,

The great stars and the little ones shall shine out again,  
they endure,

The vast immortal suns and the long-enduring pensive  
moons shall again shine.

Then dearest child mournest thou only for Jupiter ?  
Considerest thou alone the burial of the stars ?

Something there is,  
(With my lips soothing thee, adding I whisper,  
I give thee the first suggestion, the problem and  
indirection,)

Something there is more immortal even than the  
stars,

(Many the burials, many the days and nights, passing  
away,)

Something that shall endure longer even than lustrous  
Jupiter,

Longer than sun or any revolving satellite,  
Or the radiant sisters the Pleiades.

## SONG FOR ALL SEAS, ALL SHIPS

### 1

TO-DAY a rude brief recitative,  
Of ships sailing the seas, each with its special flag or  
ship-signal,

Of unnamed heroes in the ships—of waves spreading  
and spreading far as the eye can reach,

Of dashing spray, and the winds piping and blowing.  
And out of these a chant for the sailors of all nations.  
Fitful, like a surge.

Of sea-captains young or old, and the mates, and of all  
intrepid sailors,

Of the few, very choice, taciturn, whom fate can never  
surprise nor death dismay,

Pick'd sparingly without noise by thee old ocean,  
chosen by thee,

Thou sea that pickest and cullest the race in time, and  
unitest nations,

## 210 SONG FOR ALL SEAS, ALL SHIPS

Suckled by thee, old husky nurse, embodying thee,  
Indomitable, untamed as thee.

(Ever the heroes on water or on land, by ones or twos  
appearing,  
Ever the stock preserv'd and never lost, though rare,  
enough for seed preserv'd.)

### 2

Flaunt out O sea your separate flags of nations !  
Flaunt out visible as ever the various ship-signals !  
But do you reserve especially for yourself and for the  
soul of man one flag above all the rest,  
A spiritual woven signal for all nations, emblem of man  
elate above death,  
Token of all brave captains and all intrepid sailors and  
mates,  
And all that went down doing their duty,  
Reminiscent of them, twined from all intrepid captains  
young or old,  
A pennant universal, subtly waving all time, o'er all  
brave sailors,  
All seas, all ships.

## PATROLLING BARNEGAT

WILD, wild the storm, and the sea high running,  
Steady the roar of the gale, with incessant undertone  
muttering,  
Shouts of demoniac laughter fitfully piercing and peal-  
ing,  
Waves, air, midnight, their savagest trinity lashing,  
Out in the shadows there milk-white combs careering,  
On beachy slush and sand spirits of snow fierce slanting,  
Where through the murk the easterly death-wind  
breasting,  
Through cutting swirl and spray watchful and firm  
advancing,  
(That in the distance ! is that a wreck ? is the red  
signal flaring ?)

Slush and sand of the beach tireless till daylight wending,

Steadily, slowly, through hoarse roar never remitting,  
Along the midnight edge by those milk-white combs  
careering,

A group of dim, weird forms, struggling, the night  
confronting,

That savage trinity warily watching.



# BY THE ROADSIDE

## A BOSTON BALLAD

(1854)

To get betimes in Boston town I rose this morning  
early,  
Here's a good place at the corner, I must stand and see  
the show.

Clear the way there Jonathan !  
Way for the President's marshal—way for the govern-  
ment cannon !  
Way for the Federal foot and dragoons, (and the  
apparitions copiously tumbling.)

I love to look on the Stars and Stripes, I hope the fifes  
will play Yankee Doodle.

How bright shine the cutlasses of the foremost troops !  
Every man holds his revolver, marching stiff through  
Boston town.

A fog follows, antiques of the same come limping,  
Some appear wooden-legged, and some appear ban-  
daged and bloodless.

Why this is indeed a show—it has called the dead out  
of the earth !

The old graveyards of the hills have hurried to see !  
Phantoms ! phantoms countless by flank and rear !  
Cock'd hats of mothy mould—crutches made of mist !  
Arms in slings—old men leaning on young men's  
shoulders.

What troubles you Yankee phantoms ? what is all this  
chattering of bare gums ?

Does the ague convulse your limbs ? do you mistake  
your crutches for firelocks and level them ?

If you blind your eyes with tears you will not see the  
President's marshal,

If you groan such groans you might balk the govern-  
ment cannon.

For shame old maniacs—bring down those toss'd arms,  
and let your white hair be,

Here gape your great grandsons, their wives gaze at  
them from the windows,

See how well dress'd, see how orderly they conduct  
themselves.

Worse and worse—can't you stand it? are you  
retreating?

Is this hour with the living too dead for you?

Retreat then—pell-mell!

To your graves—back—back to the hills old limpers!  
I do not think you belong here anyhow.

But there is one thing that belongs here—shall I tell  
you what it is, gentlemen of Boston?

I will whisper it to the Mayor, he shall send a committee  
to England,

They shall get a grant from the Parliament, go with  
a cart to the royal vault,

Dig out King George's coffin, unwrap him quick  
from the grave-clothes, box up his bones for  
a journey,

Find a swift Yankee clipper—here is freight for you,  
black-bellied clipper,

Up with your anchor—shake out your sails—steer  
straight toward Boston bay.

Now call for the President's marshal again, bring out  
the government cannon,

Fetch home the roarers from Congress, make another  
procession, guard it with foot and dragoons.

This centre-piece for them;

Look, all orderly citizens—look from the windows,  
women!

The committee open the box, set up the regal ribs, glue  
those that will not stay,

Clap the skull on top of the ribs, and clap a crown on  
top of the skull.

You have got your revenge, old buster—the crown is  
come to its own, and more than its own.

Stick your hands in your pockets, Jonathan—you are  
a made man from this day,

You are mighty cute—and here is one of your bargains.

### GODS

LOVER divine and perfect Comrade,  
Waiting content, invisible yet, but certain,  
Be thou my God.

Thou, thou, the Ideal Man,  
Fair, able, beautiful, content, and loving,  
Complete in body and dilate in spirit,  
Be thou my God.

O Death, (for Life has served its turn,)  
Opener and usher to the heavenly mansion,  
Be thou my God.

Aught, aught of mightiest, best I see, conceive, or  
know,  
(To break the stagnant tie—thee, thee to free, O soul,)  
Be thou my God.

All great ideas, the races' aspirations,  
All heroisms, deeds of rapt enthusiasts,  
Be ye my Gods.

Or Time and Space,  
Or shape of Earth divine and wondrous,  
Or some fair shape I viewing, worship,  
Or lustrous orb of sun or star by night,  
Be ye my Gods.

## WHEN I HEARD THE LEARN'D ASTRONOMER

WHEN I heard the learn'd astronomer,  
 When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in columns  
     before me,  
 When I was shown the charts and diagrams, to add,  
     divide, and measure them,  
 When I sitting heard the astronomer where he lectured  
     with much applause in the lecture-room,  
 How soon unaccountable I became tired and sick,  
 Till rising and gliding out I wander'd off by myself,  
 In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to  
     time,  
 Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars.

## I SIT AND LOOK OUT

I sit and look out upon all the sorrows of the world,  
     and upon all oppression and shame,  
 I hear secret convulsive sobs from young men at anguish  
     with themselves, remorseful after deeds done,  
 I see in low life the mother misused by her children,  
     dying, neglected, gaunt, desperate,  
 I see the wife misused by her husband, I see the treacher-  
     ous seducer of young women,  
 I mark the ranklings of jealousy and unrequited love  
     attempted to be hid, I see these sights on the  
     earth,  
 I see the workings of battle, pestilence, tyranny, I see  
     martyrs and prisoners,  
 I observe a famine at sea, I observe the sailors casting  
     lots who shall be kill'd to preserve the lives of the  
     rest,  
 I observe the slights and degradations cast by arrogant  
     persons upon labourers, the poor, and upon negroes,  
     and the like ;  
 All these—all the meanness and agony without end  
     I sitting look out upon,  
 See, hear, and am silent.

## TO RICH GIVERS

WHAT you give me I cheerfully accept,  
 A little sustenance, a hut and garden, a little money,  
     as I rendezvous with my poems,  
 A traveller's lodging and breakfast as I journey through  
     the States,—why should I be ashamed to own such  
     gifts? why to advertise for them?  
 For I myself am not one who bestows nothing upon  
     man and woman,  
 For I bestow upon any man or woman the entrance to  
     all the gifts of the universe:

## THE DALLIANCE OF THE EAGLES

SKIRTING the river road, (my forenoon walk, my rest,)  
 Skyward in air a sudden muffled sound, the dalliance  
     of the eagles,  
 The rushing amorous contact high in space together,  
 The clinching interlocking claws, a living, fierce,  
     gyrating wheel,  
 Four beating wings, two beaks, a swirling mass tight  
     grappling,  
 In tumbling turning clustering loops, straight down-  
     ward falling,  
 Till o'er the river pois'd, the twain yet one, a moment's  
     lull,  
 A motionless still balance in the air, then parting, talons  
     loosing,  
 Upward again on slow-firm pinions slanting, their  
     separate diverse flight,  
 She hers, he his, pursuing.

## ROAMING IN THOUGHT

(After reading HEGEL)

ROAMING in thought over the Universe, I saw the little  
     that is Good steadily hastening towards im-  
     mortality,  
 And the vast all that is call'd Evil I saw hastening to  
     merge itself and become lost and dead.

## A FARM PICTURE

THROUGH the ample open door of the peaceful country  
 barn,  
 A sunlit pasture field with cattle and horses feeding,  
 And haze and vista, and the far horizon fading away.

## BEAUTIFUL WOMEN

WOMEN sit or move to and fro, some old, some young,  
 The young are beautiful—but the old are more beautiful  
 than the young.

## MOTHER AND BABE

I SEE the sleeping babe nestling the breast of its mother,  
 The sleeping mother and babe—hush'd, I study them  
 long and long.

## THOUGHT

OF obedience, faith, adhesiveness;  
 As I stand aloof and look there is to me something  
 profoundly affecting in large masses of men following  
 the lead of those who do not believe in men.

## THOUGHT

OF Equality—as if it harm'd me, giving others the same  
 chances and rights as myself—as if it were not  
 indispensable to my own rights that others possess  
 the same.

## TO OLD AGE

I SEE in you the estuary that enlarges and spreads  
 itself grandly as it pours in the great sea.

## DRUM-TAPS

### FIRST O SONGS FOR A PRELUDE

FIRST O songs for a prelude,  
Lightly strike on the stretch'd tympanum pride and joy  
in my city,  
How she led the rest to arms, how she gave the cue,  
How at once with lithe limbs unwaiting a moment she  
sprang,  
(O superb ! O Manhattan, my own, my peerless !  
O strongest you in the hour of danger, in crisis ! O  
truer than steel !)  
How you sprang—how you threw off the costumes of  
peace with indifferent hand,  
How your soft opera-music changed, and the drum and  
fife were heard in their stead,  
How you led to the war, (that shall serve for our prelude,  
songs of soldiers,)  
How Manhattan drum-taps led.  
Forty years had I in my city seen soldiers parading,  
Forty years as a pageant, till unawares the lady of this  
teeming and turbulent city,  
Sleepless amid her ships, her houses, her incalculable  
wealth,  
With her million children around her, suddenly,  
At dead of night, at news from the south,  
Incens'd struck with clinch'd hand the pavement.  
A shock electric, the night sustain'd it,  
Till with ominous hum our hive at daybreak pour'd  
out its myriads.  
From the houses then and the workshops, and through  
all the doorways,  
Leapt they tumultuous, and lo ! Manhattan arming.  
To the drum-taps prompt,  
The young men falling in and arming.

The mechanics arming, (the trowel, the jack-plane, the  
 blacksmith's hammer, tost aside with precipita-  
 tion,)  
 The lawyer leaving his office and arming, the judge  
 leaving the court,  
 The driver deserting his wagon in the street, jumping  
 down, throwing the reins abruptly down on the  
 horses' backs,  
 The salesman leaving the store, the boss, book-keeper,  
 porter, all leaving ;  
 Squads gather everywhere by common consent and  
 arm,  
 The new recruits, even boys, the old men show them  
 how to wear their accoutrements, they buckle  
 the straps carefully,  
 Outdoors arming, indoors arming, the flash of the  
 musket-barrels,  
 The white tents cluster in camps, the arm'd sentries  
 around, the sunrise cannon and again at sunset,  
 Arm'd regiments arrive every day, pass through the  
 city, and embark from the wharves,  
 (How good they look as they tramp down to the river,  
 sweaty, with their guns on their shoulders !  
 How I love them! how I could hug them, with their  
 brown faces and their clothes and knapsacks  
 cover'd with dust !)  
 The blood of the city up—arm'd ! arm'd ! the cry  
 everywhere,  
 The flags flung out from the steeples of churches and  
 from all the public buildings and stores,  
 The tearful parting, the mother kisses her son, the son  
 kisses his mother,  
 (Loath is the mother to part, yet not a word does she  
 speak to detain him,)  
 The tumultuous escort, the ranks of policemen preced-  
 ing, clearing the way,  
 The unpent enthusiasm, the wild cheers of the crowd  
 for their favourites,  
 The artillery, the silent cannons bright as gold, drawn  
 along, rumble lightly over the stones,



## 220 FIRST O SONGS FOR A PRELUDE

(Silent cannons, soon to cease your silence,  
 Soon unlimber'd to begin the red business ;)  
 All the mutter of preparation, all the determin'd  
 arming,  
 The hospital service, the lint, bandages and medi-  
 cines,  
 The women volunteering for nurses, the work begun  
 for in earnest, no mere parade now ;  
 War ! an arm'd race is advancing ! the welcome for  
 battle, no turning away ;  
 War ! be it weeks, months, or years, an arm'd race is  
 advancing to welcome it.

Mannahatta a-march—and it's O to sing it well !  
 It's O for a manly life in the camp.

And the sturdy artillery,  
 The guns bright as gold, the work for giants, to serve  
 well the guns,  
 Unlimber them ! (no more as the past forty years for  
 salutes for courtesies merely,  
 Put in something now besides powder and wadding.)  
 And you lady of ships, you Mannahatta,  
 Old matron of this proud, friendly, turbulent city,  
 Often in peace and wealth, you were pensive or covertly  
 frown'd amid all your children,  
 But now you smile with joy exulting old Mannahatta.

### BEAT ! BEAT ! DRUMS ✓

BEAT ! beat ! drums !—blow ! bugles ! blow !  
 Through the windows—through doors—burst like  
 a ruthless force,  
 Into the solemn church, and scatter the congregation,  
 Into the school where the scholar is studying ;  
 Leave not the bridegroom quiet—no happiness must  
 he have now with his bride,  
 Nor the peaceful farmer any peace, ploughing his field  
 or gathering his grain,  
 So fierce you whirr and pound you drums—so shrill you  
 bugles blow.

Beat ! beat ! drums !—blow ! bugles ! blow !  
Over the traffic of cities—over the rumble of wheels in  
the streets ;  
Are beds prepared for sleepers at night in the houses ?  
no sleepers must sleep in those beds,  
No bargainers' bargains by day—no brokers or specu-  
lators—would they continue ?  
Would the talkers be talking ? would the singer attempt  
to sing ?  
Would the lawyer rise in the court to state his case  
before the judge ?  
Then rattle quicker, heavier drums—you bugles wilder  
blow.  
Beat ! beat ! drums !—blow ! bugles ! blow !  
Make no parley—stop for no expostulation,  
Mind not the timid—mind not the weeper or prayer,  
Mind not the old man beseeching the young man,  
Let not the child's voice be heard, nor the mother's  
entreaties,  
Make even the trestles to shake the dead where they  
lie awaiting the hearses,  
So strong you thump O terrible drums—so loud you  
bugles blow.

FROM PAUMANOK STARTING I FLY LIKE  
A BIRD

FROM Paumanok starting I fly like a bird,  
Around and around to soar to sing the idea of all,  
To the north betaking myself to sing there arctic songs,  
To Kanada till I absorb Kanada in myself, to Michigan  
then,  
To Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, to sing their songs,  
(they are inimitable ;) )  
Then to Ohio and Indiana to sing theirs, to Missouri and  
Kansas and Arkansas to sing theirs,  
To Tennessee and Kentucky, to the Carolinas and  
Georgia to sing theirs,  
To Texas and so along up toward California, to roam  
accepted everywhere ;

## 222 FROM PAUMANOK I FLY LIKE A BIRD

To sing first, (to the tap of the war-drum if need be,)  
The idea of all, of the Western world one and inseparable,  
And then the song of each member of these States.

### RISE O DAYS FROM YOUR FATHOMLESS DEEPS

#### I

RISE O days from your fathomless deeps, till you loftier,  
fiercer sweep,  
Long for my soul hungering gymnastic I devour'd what  
the earth gave me,  
Long I roam'd the woods of the north, long I watch'd  
Niagara pouring,  
I travell'd the prairies over and slept on their breast,  
I cross'd the Nevadas, I cross'd the plateaus,  
I ascended the towering rocks along the Pacific, I sail'd  
out to sea,  
I sail'd through the storm, I was refresh'd by the storm,  
I watch'd with joy the threatening maws of the waves,  
I mark'd the white combs where they career'd so high,  
curling over,  
I heard the wind piping, I saw the black clouds,  
Saw from below what arose and mounted, (O superb !  
O wild as my heart, and powerful !)  
Heard the continuous thunder as it bellow'd after the  
lightning,  
Noted the slender and jagged threads of lightning as  
sudden and fast amid the din they chased each  
other across the sky ;  
These, and such as these, I, elate, saw—saw with  
wonder, yet pensive and masterful,  
All the menacing might of the globe uprisen around me,  
Yet there with my soul I fed, I fed content, super-  
cilious.

#### 2

'Twas well, O soul—'twas a good preparation you gave  
me,  
Now we advance our latent and ampler hunger to fill,

RISE FROM YOUR FATHOMLESS DEEPS 223

Now we go forth to receive what the earth and the sea  
never gave us,  
Not through the mighty woods we go, but through the  
mightier cities,  
Something for us is pouring now more than Niagara  
pouring,  
Torrents of men, (sources and rills of the Northwest are  
you indeed inexhaustible ?)  
What, to pavements and homesteads here, what were  
those storms of the mountains and sea ?  
What, to passions I witness around me to-day ? was  
the sea risen ?  
Was the wind piping the pipe of death under the black  
clouds ?  
Lo ! from deeps more unfathomable, something more  
deadly and savage,  
Manhattan rising, advancing with menacing front—  
Cincinnati, Chicago, unchain'd ;  
What was that swell I saw on the ocean ? behold what  
comes here,  
How it climbs with daring feet and hands—how it  
dashes !  
How the true thunder bellows after the lightning—how  
bright the flashes of lightning !  
How Democracy with desperate vengeful port strides  
on, shown through the dark by those flashes of  
lightning !  
(Yet a mournful wail and low sob I fancied I heard  
through the dark,  
In a lull of the deafening confusion.)

3

Thunder on ! stride on, Democracy ! strike with venge-  
ful stroke !  
And do you rise higher than ever yet O days. O  
cities !  
Crash heavier, heavier yet O storms ! you have done  
me good,  
My soul prepared in the mountains absorbs your  
immortal strong nutriment,

## 224 RISE FROM YOUR FATHOMLESS DEEPS

Long had I walk'd my cities, my country roads through  
farms, only half satisfied,  
One doubt nauseous undulating like a snake, crawl'd  
on the ground before me,  
Continually preceding my steps, turning upon me oft,  
ironically hissing low ;  
The cities I loved so well I abandon'd and left, I sped  
to the certainties suitable to me,  
Hungering, hungering, hungering, for primal energies  
and Nature's dauntlessness,  
I refresh'd myself with it only, I could relish it only,  
I waited the bursting forth of the pent fire—on the  
water and air I waited long ;  
But now I no longer wait, I am fully satisfied, I am  
glutted,  
I have witness'd the true lightning, I have witness'd  
my cities electric,  
I have lived to behold man burst forth and warlike  
America rise,  
Hence I will seek no more the food of the northern  
solitary wilds,  
No more the mountains roam or sail the stormy sea.

## CITY OF SHIPS

CITY of ships !  
(O the black ships ! O the fierce ships !  
O the beautiful sharp-bow'd steam-ships and sail-  
ships !)  
City of the world ! (for all races are here,  
All the lands of the earth make contributions here ;)  
City of the sea ! city of hurried and glittering tides !  
City whose gleeful tides continually rush or recede,  
whirling in and out with eddies and foam !  
City of wharves and stores—city of tall façades of  
marble and iron !  
Proud and passionate city—mettlesome, mad, extrava-  
gant city !  
Spring up O city—not for peace alone, but be indeed  
yourself, warlike !

Fear not—submit to no models but your own O city !  
 Behold me—incarnate me as I have incarnated you !  
 I have rejected nothing you offer'd me—whom you  
     adopted I have adopted,  
 Good or bad I never question you—I love all—I do not  
     condemn any thing.  
 I chant and celebrate all that is yours—yet peace no  
     more,  
 In peace I chanted peace, but now the drum of war is  
     mine,  
 War, red war is my song through your streets, O city!

### THE CENTENARIAN'S STORY

*Volunteer of 1861-2 (at Washington Park, Brooklyn, assisting the Centenarian)*

GIVE me your hand old Revolutionary,  
 The hill-top is nigh, but a few steps, (make room gentlemen,  
     men,)  
 Up the path you have follow'd me well, spite of your  
     hundred and extra years,  
 You can walk old man, though your eyes are almost  
     done,  
 Your faculties serve you, and presently I must have  
     them serve me.

Rest, while I tell what the crowd around us means,  
 On the plain below recruits are drilling and exercising,  
 There is the camp, one regiment departs to-morrow,  
 Do you hear the officers giving their orders ?  
 Do you hear the clank of the muskets ?

Why what comes over you now old man ?  
 Why do you tremble and clutch my hand so convulsively ?

The troops are but drilling, they are yet surrounded with  
     smiles,  
 Around them at hand the well-drest friends and the  
     women,  
 While splendid and warm the afternoon sun shines  
     down,

Green the midsummer verdure and fresh blows the  
dallying breeze,  
O'er proud and peaceful cities and arm<sup>s</sup> of the sea  
between.

But drill and parade are over, they march back to  
quarters,  
Only hear that approval of hands ! hear what a clap-  
ping !

As wending the crowds now part and disperse—but we  
old man,  
Not for nothing have I brought you hither—we must  
remain,  
You to speak in your turn, and I to listen and tell.

*The Centenarian*

When I clutch'd your hand it was not with terror,  
But suddenly pouring about me here on every side,  
And below there where the boys were drilling, and up  
the slopes they ran,  
And where tents are pitch'd, and wherever you see  
south and south-east and south-west,  
Over hills, across lowlands, and in the skirts of  
woods,  
And along the shores, in mire (now fill'd over) came  
again and suddenly raged,  
As eighty-five years a-gone no mere parade receiv'd  
with applause of friends,  
But a battle which I took part in myself—aye, long ago  
as it is, I took part in it,  
Walking then this hill-top, this same ground.  
Aye, this is the ground,  
My blind eyes even as I speak behold it re-peopled  
from graves,  
The years recede, pavements and stately houses  
disappear,  
Rude forts appear again, the old hoop'd guns are  
mounted,  
I see the lines of rais'd earth stretching from river to  
bay,

I mark the vista of waters, I mark the uplands and slopes ;

Here we lay encamp'd, it was this time in summer also.

As I talk I remember all, I remember the Declaration,  
It was read here, the whole army paraded, it was read to us here,

By his staff surrounded the General stood in the middle,  
he held up his unsheath'd sword,  
It glitter'd in the sun in full sight of the army.

'Twas a bold act then—the English war-ships had just arrived,

We could watch down the lower bay where they lay at anchor,

And the transports swarming with soldiers.

A few days more and they landed, and then the battle.

Twenty thousand were brought against us,  
A veteran force furnish'd with good artillery.

I tell not now the whole of the battle,  
But one brigade early in the forenoon order'd forward to engage the red-coats,

Of that brigade I tell, and how steadily it march'd,  
And how long and well it stood confronting death.

Who do you think that was marching steadily sternly confronting death ?

It was the brigade of the youngest men, two thousand strong,

Rais'd in Virginia and Maryland, and most of them known personally to the General.

Jauntily forward they went with quick step toward Gowanus' waters,

Till of a sudden unlook'd for by defiles through the woods, gain'd at night,

The British advancing, rounding in from the east, fiercely playing their guns,

That brigade of the youngest was cut off and at the enemy's mercy.



The General watch'd them from this hill,  
They made repeated desperate attempts to burst their  
environment,  
Then drew close together, very compact, their flag  
flying in the middle,  
But O from the hills how the cannon were thinning and  
thinning them !

It sickens me yet, that slaughter !  
I saw the moisture gather in drops on the face of the  
General,  
I saw how he wrung his hands in anguish.

Meanwhile the British manœuvr'd to draw us out for  
a pitch'd battle,  
But we dared not trust the chances of a pitch'd battle.  
We fought the fight in detachments,  
Sallying forth we fought at several points, but in each  
the luck was against us,  
Our foe advancing, steadily getting the best of it,  
push'd us back to the works on this hill,  
Till we turn'd menacing here, and then he left us.

That was the going out of the brigade of the youngest  
men, two thousand strong,  
Few return'd, nearly all remain in Brooklyn.  
That and here my General's first battle,  
No women looking on nor sunshine to bask in, it did  
not conclude with applause,  
Nobody clapp'd hands here then.

But in darkness in mist on the ground under a chill rain,  
Wearied that night we lay foil'd and sullen,  
While scornfully laugh'd many an arrogant lord off  
against us encamp'd,  
Quite within hearing, feasting, clinking wine-glasses  
together over their victory.

So dull and damp and another day,  
But the night of that, mist lifting, rain ceasing,  
Silent as a ghost while they thought they were sure of  
him, my General retreated.

I saw him at the river-side,  
Down by the ferry lit by torches, hastening the em-  
barkation ;  
My General waited till the soldiers and wounded were  
all pass'd over,  
And then, (it was just ere sunrise,) these eyes rested on  
him for the last time.

Every one else seem'd fill'd with gloom,  
Many no doubt thought of capitulation.

But when my General pass'd me,  
As he stood in his boat and look'd toward the coming  
sun,  
I saw something different from capitulation.

*Terminus*

Enough, the Centenarian's story ends.  
The two, the past and present, have interchanged,  
I myself as connector, as chansonnier of a great future,  
am now speaking.

And is this the ground Washington trod ?  
And these waters I listlessly daily cross, are these the  
waters he cross'd,  
As resolute in defeat as other generals in their proudest  
triumphs ?

I must copy the story, and send it eastward and west-  
ward,  
I must preserve that look as it beam'd on you rivers of  
Brooklyn.

See—as the annual round returns the phantoms return,  
It is the 27th of August and the British have landed,  
The battle begins and goes against us, behold through  
the smoke Washington's face,  
The brigade of Virginia and Maryland have march'd  
forth to intercept the enemy,  
They are cut off, murderous artillery from the hills  
plays upon them,  
Rank after rank falls, while over them silently droops  
the flag,

Baptized that day in many a young man's bloody  
wounds,

In death, defeat, and sisters', mothers' tears.

Ah, hills and slopes of Brooklyn ! I perceive you are  
more valuable than your owners supposed ;

In the midst of you stands an encampment very old,  
Stands forever the camp of that dead brigade.

### CAVALRY CROSSING A FORD

A LINE in long array where they wind betwixt green  
islands,

They take a serpentine course, their arms flash in the  
sun—hark to the musical clank,

Behold the silvery river, in it the splashing horses  
loitering stop to drink,

Behold the brown-faced men, each group, each person  
a picture, the negligent rest on the saddles,

Some emerge on the opposite bank, others are just  
entering the ford—while,

Scarlet and blue and snowy white,

The guidon flags flutter gaily in the wind.

### BIVOUAC ON A MOUNTAIN SIDE

I SEE before me now a travelling army halting,

Below a fertile valley spread, with barns and the  
orchards of summer,

Behind, the terraced sides of a mountain, abrupt, in  
places rising high,

Broken, with rocks, with clinging cedars, with tall  
shapes dingly seen,

The numerous camp-fires scatter'd near and far, some  
away up on the mountain,

The shadowy forms of men and horses, looming, large-  
sized, flickering,

And over all the sky—the sky ! far, far out of reach,  
studded, breaking out, the eternal stars.

## AN ARMY CORPS ON THE MARCH

WITH its cloud of skirmishers in advance,  
 With now the sound of a single shot snapping like a  
     whip, and now an irregular volley,  
 The swarming ranks press on and on, the dense brigades  
     press on,  
 Glittering dimly, toiling under the sun—the dust-  
     cover'd men,  
 In columns rise and fall to the undulations of the  
     ground,  
 With artillery interspers'd—the wheels rumble, the  
     horses sweat,  
 As the army corps advances.

## BY THE BIVOUAC'S FITFUL FLAME

BY the bivouac's fitful flame,  
 A procession winding around me, solemn and sweet and  
     slow—but first I note,  
 The tents of the sleeping army, the fields' and woods'  
     dim outline,  
 The darkness lit by spots of kindled fire, the silence,  
 Like a phantom far or near an occasional figure  
     moving,  
 The shrubs and trees, (as I lift my eyes they seem to be  
     stealthily watching me,)  
 While wind in procession thoughts, O tender and won-  
     drous thoughts,  
 Of life and death, of home and the past and loved, and  
     of those that are far away;  
 A solemn and slow procession there as I sit on the  
     ground,  
 By the bivouac's fitful flame.

## COME UP FROM THE FIELDS FATHER

Come up from the fields father, here's a letter from our  
 Pete,  
 And come to the front door mother, here's a letter from  
 thy dear son.

Lo, 'tis autumn,  
 Lo, where the trees, deeper green, yellower and redder,  
 Cool and sweeten Ohio's villages with leaves fluttering  
 in the moderate wind,  
 Where apples ripe in the orchards hang and grapes on  
 the trellis'd vines,  
 (Smell you the smell of the grapes on the vines ?  
 Smell you the buckwheat where the bees were lately  
 buzzing ?)

Above all, lo, the sky so calm, so transparent after the  
 rain, and with wondrous clouds,  
 Below too, all calm, all vital and beautiful, and the  
 farm prospers well.

Down in the fields all prospers well,  
 But now from the fields come father, come at the  
 daughter's call,  
 And come to the entry mother, to the front door come  
 right away.

Fast as she can she hurries, something ominous, her  
 steps trembling,  
 She does not tarry to smooth her hair nor adjust her cap.

Open the envelope quickly,  
 O this is not our son's writing, yet his name is sign'd,  
 O a strange hand writes for our dear son, O stricken  
 mother's soul !

All swims before her eyes, flashes with black, she catches  
 the main words only,  
 Sentences broken, *gunshot wound in the breast, cavalry  
 skirmish, taken to hospital,*  
*At present low, but will soon be better.*

Ah now the single figure to me,  
Amid all teeming and wealthy Ohio with all its cities  
and farm,  
Sickly white in the face and dull in the head, very faint,  
By the jamb of a door leans.

*Grieve not so, dear mother,* (the just-grown daughter  
speaks through her sobs,

The little sisters huddle around speechless and dismay'd,)

*See, dearest mother, the letter says Pete will soon be better.*

Alas poor boy, he will never be better, (nor maybe needs  
to be better, that brave and simple soul,)

While they stand at home at the door he is dead already,  
The only son is dead.

But the mother needs to be better,

She with thin form presently drest in black,

By day her meals untouch'd, then at night fitfully  
sleeping, often waking,

In the midnight waking, weeping, longing with one deep  
longing,

O that she might withdraw unnoticed, silent from life  
escape and withdraw,

To follow, to seek, to be with her dear dead son.

### VIGIL STRANGE I KEPT ON THE FIELD ONE NIGHT

VIGIL strange I kept on the field one night ;

When you my son and my comrade dropt at my side  
that day,

One look I but gave which your dear eyes return'd with  
a look I shall never forget,

One touch of your hand to mine O boy, reach'd up as  
you lay on the ground,

Then onward I sped in the battle, the even-contested  
battle,

Till late in the night reliev'd to the place at last again  
I made my way,

## 234 VIGIL STRANGE I KEPT ONE NIGHT

Found you in death so cold dear comrade, found your  
body son of responding kisses, (never again on  
earth responding,)

Bared your face in the starlight, curious the scene, cool  
blew the moderate night-wind,

Long there and then in vigil I stood, dimly around me  
the battle-field spreading,

Vigil wondrous and vigil sweet there in the fragrant  
silent night,

But not a tear fell, not even a long-drawn sigh, long,  
long I gazed,

Then on the earth partially reclining sat by your side  
leaning my chin in my hands,

Passing sweet hours, immortal and mystic hours with  
you dearest comrade—not a tear, not a word,

Vigil of silence, love and death, vigil for you my son and  
my soldier,

As onward silently stars aloft, eastward new ones  
upward stole,

Vigil final for you brave boy, (I could not save you,  
swift was your death,

I faithfully loved you and cared for you living, I think  
we shall surely meet again,)

Till at latest lingering of the night, indeed just as the  
dawn appear'd,

My comrade I wrapt in his blanket, envelop'd well  
his form,

Folded the blanket well, tucking it carefully over head  
and carefully under feet,

And there and then and bathed by the rising sun, my  
son in his grave, in his rude-dug grave I deposited,

Ending my vigil strange with that, vigil of night and  
battle-field dim,

Vigil for boy of responding kisses, (never again on earth  
responding,)

Vigil for comrade swiftly slain, vigil I never forget, how  
as day brighten'd,

I rose from the chill ground and folded my soldier well  
in his blanket,

And buried him where he fell.

A MARCH IN THE RANKS HARD-PREST,  
AND THE ROAD UNKNOWN

A MARCH in the ranks hard-prest, and the road  
unknown,  
A route through a heavy wood with muffled steps in  
the darkness,  
Our army foil'd with loss severe, and the sullen remnant  
retreating,  
Till after midnight glimmer upon us the lights of a dim-  
lighted building,  
We come to an open space in the woods, and halt by  
the dim-lighted building,  
'Tis a large old church at the crossing roads, now an  
impromptu hospital,  
Entering but for a minute I see a sight beyond all the  
pictures and poems ever made,  
Shadows of deepest, deepest black, just lit by moving  
candles and lamps,  
And by one great pitchy torch stationary with wild  
red flame and clouds of smoke,  
By these, crowds, groups of forms vaguely I see on the  
floor, some in the pews laid down,  
At my feet more distinctly a soldier, a mere lad, in,  
danger of bleeding to death, (he is shot in the  
abdomen,)  
I stanch the blood temporarily, (the youngster's face is  
white as a lily,)  
Then before I depart I sweep my eyes o'er the scene  
fain to absorb it all,  
Faces, varieties, postures beyond description, most in  
obscurity, some of them dead,  
Surgeons operating, attendants holding lights, the smell  
of ether, the odour of blood,  
The crowd, O the crowd of the bloody forms, the yard  
outside also fill'd,  
Some on the bare ground, some on planks or stretchers,  
some in the death-spasm sweating,  
An occasional scream or cry, the doctor's shouted orders  
or calls,



The glisten of the little steel instruments catching the  
glint of the torches,  
These I resume as I chant, I see again the forms, I smell  
the odour,  
Then hear outside the orders given, *Fall in, my men,*  
*fall in ;*  
But first I bend to the dying lad, his eyes open, a half-  
smile gives he me,  
Then the eyes close, calmly close, and I speed forth to  
the darkness,  
Resuming, marching, ever in darkness marching, on in  
the ranks,  
The unknown road still marching.

#### A SIGHT IN CAMP IN THE DAYBREAK GREY AND DIM

A SIGHT in camp in the daybreak grey and dim,  
As from my tent I emerge so early sleepless,  
As slow I walk in the cool fresh air the path near by the  
hospital tent,  
Three forms I see on stretchers lying, brought out there  
untended lying,  
Over each the blanket spread, ample brownish woollen  
blanket,  
Grey and heavy blanket, folding, covering all.  
Curious I halt and silent stand,  
Then with light fingers I from the face of the nearest  
the first just lift the blanket ;  
Who are you elderly man so gaunt and grim, with  
well-grey'd hair, and flesh all sunken about the  
eyes ?  
Who are you my dear comrade ?  
Then to the second I step—and who are you my child  
and darling ?  
Who are you sweet boy with cheeks yet blooming ?  
Then to the third—a face nor child nor old, very calm,  
as of beautiful yellow-white ivory ;

## A SIGHT IN CAMP IN THE DAYBREAK 237

Young man I think I know you—I think this face is the  
face of the Christ himself,  
Dead and divine and brother of all, and here again he  
lies.

### AS TOILSOME I WANDER'D VIRGINIA'S WOODS

As toilsome I wander'd Virginia's woods,  
To the music of rustling leaves kick'd by my feet, (for  
'twas autumn,)  
I mark'd at the foot of a tree the grave of a soldier ;  
Mortally wounded he and buried on the retreat, (easily  
all could I understand,)  
The halt of a mid-day hour, when up ! no time to lose—  
yet this sign left,  
On a tablet scrawl'd and nail'd on the tree by the grave,  
*Bold, cautious, true, and my loving comrade.*  
Long, long I muse, then on my way go wandering,  
Many a changeful season to follow, and many a scene  
of life,  
Yet at times through changeful season and scene,  
abrupt, alone, or in the crowded street,  
Comes before me the unknown soldier's grave, comes  
the inscription rude in Virginia's woods,  
*Bold, cautious, true, and my loving comrade.*

### NOT THE PILOT

Not the pilot has charged himself to bring his ship into  
port, though beaten back and many times baffled ;  
Not the pathfinder penetrating inland weary and long,  
By deserts parch'd, snows chill'd, rivers wet, perseveres  
till he reaches his destination,  
More than I have charged myself, heeded or unheeded,  
to compose a march for these States,  
For a battle-call, rousing to arms if need be, years, cen-  
turies hence.

## YEAR THAT TREMBLED AND REEL'D BENEATH ME

YEAR that trembled and reel'd beneath me !  
 Your summer wind was warm enough, yet the air I  
     breathed froze me,  
 A thick gloom fell through the sunshine and darken'd  
     me,  
 Must I change my triumphant songs ? said I to myself,  
 Must I indeed learn to chant the cold dirges of the  
     baffled ?  
 And sullen hymns of defeat ?

## THE WOUND-DRESSER

### I

AN old man bending I come among new faces,  
 Years looking backward resuming in answer to chil-  
     dren,  
 Come tell us old man, as from young men and maidens  
     that love me,  
 (Arous'd and angry, I'd thought to beat the alarum, and  
     urge relentless war,  
 But soon my fingers fail'd me, my face droop'd and  
     I resign'd myself,  
 To sit by the wounded and soothe them, or silently  
     watch the dead ;)

Years hence of these scenes, of these furious passions,  
     these chances,  
 Of unsurpass'd heroes, (was one side so brave ? the  
     other was equally brave ;)

Now be witness again, paint the mightiest armies of  
     earth,  
 Of those armies so rapid so wondrous what saw you to  
     tell us ?

What stays with you latest and deepest ? of curious  
     panics,  
 Of hard-fought engagements or sieges tremendous  
     what deepest remains ?

## 2

O maidens and young men I love and that love me,  
What you ask of my days those the strangest and  
sudden your talking recalls,  
Soldier alert I arrive after a long march cover'd with  
sweat and dust,  
In the nick of time I come, plunge in the fight, loudly  
shout in the rush of successful charge,  
Enter the captur'd works—yet lo, like a swift-running  
river they fade,  
Pass and are gone they fade—I dwell not on soldiers'  
perils or soldiers' joys,  
(Both I remember well—many the hardships, few, the  
joys, yet I was content.)

But in silence, in dreams' projections,  
While the world of gain and appearance and mirth  
goes on,  
So soon what is over forgotten, and waves wash the  
imprints off the sand,  
With hinged knees returning I enter the doors, (while  
for you up there,  
Whoever you are, follow without noise and be of strong  
heart.)

Bearing the bandages, water and sponge,  
Straight and swift to my wounded I go,  
Where they lie on the ground after the battle brought  
in,  
Where their priceless blood reddens the grass the  
ground,  
Or to the rows of the hospital tent, or under the roof'd  
hospital,  
To the long rows of cots up and down each side I  
return,  
To each and all one after another I draw near, not one  
do I miss,  
An attendant follows holding a tray, he carries a refuse  
pail,  
Soon to be fill'd with clotted rags and blood, emptied,  
and fill'd again.

I onward go, I stop,  
With hinged knees and steady hand to dress wounds,  
I am firm with each, the pangs are sharp yet unavoid-  
able,  
One turns to me his appealing eyes—poor boy ! I never  
knew you,  
Yet I think I could not refuse this moment to die for  
you, if that would save you.

## 3

On, on I go, (open doors of time ! open hospital doors !)  
The crush'd head I dress, (poor crazed hand tear not  
the bandage away,)  
The neck of the cavalry-man with the bullet through  
and through I examine,  
Hard the breathing rattles, quite glazed already the  
eye, yet life struggles hard,  
(Come sweet death ! be persuaded O beautiful death !  
In mercy come quickly.)

From the stump of the arm, the amputated hand,  
I undo the clotted lint, remove the slough, wash off the  
matter and blood,  
Back on his pillow the soldier bends with curv'd neck  
and side-falling head,  
His eyes are closed, his face is pale, he dares not look on  
the bloody stump,  
And has not yet look'd on it.

I dress a wound in the side, deep, deep,  
But a day or two more, for see the frame all wasted and  
sinking,  
And the yellow-blue countenance see.

I dress the perforated shoulder, the foot with the bullet-  
wound,  
Cleanse the one with a gnawing and putrid gangrene,  
so sickening, so offensive,  
While the attendant stands behind aside me holding  
the tray and pail.

I am faithful, I do not give out,  
The fractur'd thigh, the knee, the wound in the abdomen,  
These and more I dress with impassive hand, (yet deep  
in my breast a fire, a burning flame.)

## 4

Thus in silence in dreams' projections,  
Returning, resuming, I thread my way through the hospitals,  
The hurt and wounded I pacify with soothing hand,  
I sit by the restless all the dark night, some are so young,  
Some suffer so much, I recall the experience sweet and sad,  
(Many a soldier's loving arms about this neck have  
cross'd and rested,  
Many a soldier's kiss dwells on these bearded lips.)

## \* LONG, TOO LONG AMERICA

LONG, too long America,  
Travelling roads all even and peaceful you learn'd from  
joys and prosperity only,  
But now, ah now, to learn from crises of anguish,  
advancing, grappling with direst fate and recoiling  
not,  
And now to conceive and show to the world what your  
children en-masse really are,  
(For who except myself has yet conceiv'd what your  
children en-masse really are ?)

## GIVE ME THE SPLENDID SILENT SUN

## 1

GIVE me the splendid silent sun with all his beams  
full-dazzling,  
Give me juicy autumnal fruit ripe and red from the  
orchard,  
Give me a field where the unmow'd grass grows,

## 242 GIVE ME THE SPLENDID SILENT SUN

Give me an arbour, give me the trellis'd grape,  
 Give me fresh corn and wheat, give me serene-moving  
     animals teaching content,  
 Give me nights perfectly quiet as on high plateaus west  
     of the Mississippi, and I looking up at the stars,  
 Give me odorous at sunrise a garden of beautiful  
     flowers where I can walk undisturb'd,  
 Give me for marriage a sweet-breath'd woman of whom  
     I should never tire,  
 Give me a perfect child, give me away aside from the  
     noise of the world a rural domestic life,  
 Give me to warble spontaneous songs recluse by myself,  
     for my own ears only,  
 Give me solitude, give me Nature, give me again O  
     Nature your primal sanities !

These demanding to have them, (tired with ceaseless  
     excitement, and rack'd by the war-strife,)  
 These to procure incessantly asking, rising in cries  
     from my heart,  
 While yet incessantly asking still I adhere to my  
     city,  
 Day upon day and year upon year O city, walking your  
     streets,  
 Where you hold me enchain'd a certain time refusing  
     to give me up,  
 Yet giving to make me glutted, enrich'd of soul, you  
     give me forever faces ;  
 (O I see what I sought to escape, confronting, reversing  
     my cries,  
 I see my own soul trampling down what it ask'd for.)

### 2

Keep your splendid silent sun,  
 Keep your woods O Nature, and the quiet places by the  
     woods,  
 Keep your fields of clover and timothy, and your corn-  
     fields and orchards,  
 Keep the blossoming buckwheat fields where the Ninth-  
     month bees hum ;

## GIVE ME THE SPLENDID SILENT SUN 243

Give me faces and streets—give me these phantoms  
incessant and endless along the trottoirs !  
Give me interminable eyes—give me women—give me  
comrades and lovers by the thousand !  
Let me see new ones every day—let me hold new ones  
by the hand every day !  
Give me such shows—give me the streets of Man-  
hattan !  
Give me Broadway, with the soldiers marching—give  
me the sound of the trumpets and drums !  
(The soldiers in companies or regiments—some starting  
away, flush'd and reckless,  
Some, their time up, returning with thinn'd ranks,  
young, yet very old, worn, marching, noticing  
nothing ;)  
Give me the shores and wharves heavy-fringed with  
black ships !  
O such for me ! O an intense life, full to repletion and  
varied !  
The life of the theatre, bar-room, huge hotel. for me !  
The saloon of the steamer ! the crowded excursion for  
me ! the torchlight procession !  
The dense brigade bound for the war, with high piled  
military wagons following ;  
People, endless, streaming, with strong voices, passions,  
pageants,  
Manhattan streets with their powerful throbs, with  
beating drums as now,  
The endless and noisy chorus, the rustle and clank of  
muskets, (even the sight of the wounded,)  
Manhattan crowds, with their turbulent musical chorus !  
Manhattan faces and eyes forever for me.

## DIRGE FOR TWO VETERANS

THE last sunbeam  
Lightly falls from the finish'd Sabbath,  
On the pavement here, and there beyond it is looking,  
Down a new-made double grave.



## DIRGE FOR TWO VETERANS

Lo, the moon ascending,  
Up from the east the silvery round moon,  
Beautiful over the house-tops, ghastly, phantom moon,  
Immense and silent moon.

I see a sad procession,  
And I hear the sound of coming full-key'd bugles,  
All the channels of the city streets they're flooding,  
As with voices and with tears.

I hear the great drums pounding,  
And the small drums steady whirring,  
And every blow of the great convulsive drums,  
Strikes me through and through.

For the son is brought with the father,  
(In the foremost ranks of the fierce assault they fell,  
Two veterans son and father dropt together,  
And the double grave awaits them.)

Now nearer blow the bugles,  
And the drums strike more convulsive,  
And the daylight o'er the pavement quite has faded,  
And the strong dead-march enwraps me.

In the eastern sky up-buoying,  
The sorrowful vast phantom moves illumin'd,  
( 'Tis some mother's large transparent face,  
In heaven brighter growing.)

O strong dead-march you please me !  
O moon immense with your silvery face you soothe me !  
O my soldiers twain ! O my veterans passing to burial !  
What I have I also give you.

The moon gives you light,  
And the bugles and the drums give you music,  
And my heart, O my soldiers, my veterans,  
My heart gives you love.

## OVER THE CARNAGE ROSE PROPHEMIC A VOICE

OVER the carnage rose prophetic a voice,  
Be not dishearten'd, affection shall solve the problems  
of freedom yet,  
Those who love each other shall become invincible,  
They shall yet make Columbia victorious.

Sons of the Mother of All, you shall yet be victorious,  
You shall yet laugh to scorn the attacks of all the  
remainder of the earth.

No danger shall balk Columbia's lovers,  
If need be a thousand shall sternly immolate themselves  
for one.

One from Massachusetts shall be a Missourian's com-  
rade,  
From Maine and from hot Carolina, and another an  
Oregonese, shall be friends triune,  
More precious to each other than all the riches of the  
earth.

To Michigan, Florida perfumes shall tenderly come,  
Not the perfumes of flowers, but sweeter, and wafted  
beyond death.

It shall be customary in the houses and streets to see  
manly affection,  
The most dauntless and rude shall touch face to face  
lightly,  
The dependence of Liberty shall be lovers,  
The continuance of Equality shall be comrades.

These shall tie you and band you stronger than hoops  
of iron,  
I, ecstatic, O partners ! O lands ! with the love of  
lovers tie you.

(Were you looking to be held together by lawyers ?  
Or by an agreement on a paper ? or by arms ?  
Nay, nor the world, nor any living thing, will so  
cohere.)

## I SAW OLD GENERAL AT BAY

I SAW old General at bay,  
 (Old as he was, his grey eyes yet shone out in battle like  
 stars,)  
 His small force was now completely hemm'd in, in his  
 works,  
 He call'd for volunteers to run the enemy's lines,  
 a desperate emergency,  
 I saw a hundred and more step forth from the ranks,  
 but two or three were selected,  
 I saw them receive their orders aside, they listen'd with  
 care, the adjutant was very grave,  
 I saw them depart with cheerfulness, freely risking their  
 lives.

## THE ARTILLERYMAN'S VISION

WHILE my wife at my side lies slumbering, and the  
 wars are over long,  
 And my head on the pillow rests at home, and the  
 vacant midnight passes,  
 And through the stillness, through the dark, I hear, just  
 hear, the breath of my infant,  
 There in the room as I wake from sleep this vision  
 presses upon me ;  
 The engagement opens there and then in fantasy unreal,  
 The skirmishers begin, they crawl cautiously ahead,  
 I hear the irregular snap ! snap !  
 I hear the sounds of the different missiles, the short  
*t-h-t ! t-h-t !* of the rifle-balls,  
 I see the shells exploding leaving small white clouds,  
 I hear the great shells shrieking as they pass,  
 The grape like the hum and whirr of wind through the  
 trees, (tumultuous now the contest rages,)  
 All the scenes at the batteries rise in detail before me  
 again,  
 The crashing and smoking, the pride of the men in their  
 pieces,  
 The chief-gunner ranges and sights his piece and selects  
 a fuse of the right time,

After firing I see him lean aside and look eagerly off  
 to note the effect ;  
 Elsewhere I hear the cry of a regiment charging, (the  
 young colonel leads himself this time with brandish'd sword,)  
 I see the gaps cut by the enemy's volleys. (quickly  
 fill'd up, no delay,)  
 I breathe the suffocating smoke, then the flat clouds  
 hover low concealing all ;  
 Now a strange lull for a few seconds, not a shot fired  
 on either side,  
 Then resumed the chaos louder than ever. with eager  
 calls and orders of officers,  
 While from some distant part of the field the wind wafts  
 to my ears a shout of applause, (some special  
 success,)  
 And ever the sound of the cannon far or near, (rousing  
 even in dreams a devilish exultation and all the  
 old mad joy in the depths of my soul,)  
 And ever the hastening of infantry shifting positions,  
 batteries, cavalry, moving hither and thither,  
 (The falling, dying, I heed not, the wounded dripping  
 and red I heed not, some to the rear are hobbling,)  
 Grime, heat, rush, aide-de-camps galloping by or on  
 a full run,  
 With the patter of small arms, the warning *s-s-t* of the  
 rifles, (these in my vision I hear or see,)  
 And bombs bursting in air, and at night the vari-  
 colour'd rockets.

### ETHIOPIA SALUTING THE COLOURS

WHO are you dusky woman, so ancient hardly human,  
 With your woolly-white and turban'd head, and bare  
 bony feet ?  
 Why rising by the roadside here, do you the colours  
 greet ?  
 ('Tis while our army lines Carolina's sands and pines,  
 Forth from thy hovel door thou Ethiopia com'st to me,  
 As under doughty Sherman I march toward the sea.)

*Me master years a hundred since from my parents sun-  
der'd,*

*A little child, they caught me as the savage beast is caught,  
Then hither me across the sea the cruel slaver brought.*

No further does she say, but lingering all the day,  
Her high-borne turban'd head she wags, and rolls her  
darkling eye,

And courtesies to the regiments, the guidons moving by.

What is it fateful woman, so blear, hardly human ?

Why wag your head with turban bound, yellow, red  
and green ?

Are the things so strange and marvellous you see or  
have seen ?

### NOT YOUTH PERTAINS TO ME

Not youth pertains to me,

Nor delicatessen, I cannot beguile the time with talk,  
Awkward in the parlour, neither a dancer nor elegant,  
In the learn'd coterie sitting constrain'd and still, for  
learning inures not to me,

Beauty, knowledge, inure not to me—yet there are two  
or three things inure to me,

I have nourish'd the wounded and sooth'd many a dying  
soldier,

And at intervals waiting or in the midst of camp,  
Composed these songs.

### O TAN-FACED PRAIRIE-BOY

O TAN-FACED prairie-boy,

Before you came to camp came many a welcome gift,  
Praises and presents came and nourishing food, till at  
last among the recruits,

You came, taciturn, with nothing to give—we but look'd  
on each other,

When lo ! more than all the gifts of the world you gave  
me.

## LOOK DOWN FAIR MOON

Look down fair moon and bathe this scene,  
 Pour softly down night's nimbus floods on faces ghastly,  
     swollen, purple,  
 On the dead on their backs with arms toss'd wide,  
 Pour down your unstinted nimbus sacred moon.

## RECONCILIATION

WORD over all, beautiful as the sky,  
 Beautiful that war and all its deeds of carnage must in  
     time be utterly lost,  
 That the hands of the sisters Death and Night incessantly  
     softly wash again, and ever again, this soil'd world;  
 For my enemy is dead, a man divine as myself is dead,  
 I look where he lies white-faced and still in the coffin—  
     I draw near,  
 Bend down and touch lightly with my lips the white  
     face in the coffin.

## HOW SOLEMN AS ONE BY ONE

*(Washington City, 1865)*

How solemn as one by one,  
 As the ranks returning worn and sweaty, as the men  
     file by where I stand,  
 As the faces the masks appear, as I glance at the faces  
     studying the masks,  
 (As I glance upward out of this page studying you, dear  
     friend, whoever you are,)  
 How solemn the thought of my whispering soul to each  
     in the ranks, and to you,  
 I see behind each mask that wonder a kindred soul,  
 O the bullet could never kill what you really are, dear  
     friend,  
 Nor the bayonet stab what you really are;  
 The soul! yourself I see, great as any, good as the best,  
 Waiting secure and content, which the bullet could  
     never kill,  
 Nor the bayonet stab O friend.

# AS I LAY WITH MY HEAD IN YOUR LAP CAMERADO

As I lay with my head in your lap camerado,  
 The confession I made I resume, what I said to you  
 and the open air I resume,  
 I know I am restless and make others so,  
 I know my words are weapons full of danger, full of death,  
 For I confront peace, security, and all the settled laws,  
 to unsettle them,  
 I am more resolute because all have denied me than I  
 could ever have been had all accepted me,  
 I heed not and have never heeded either experience,  
 cautions, majorities, nor ridicule,  
 And the threat of what is call'd hell is little or nothing  
 to me,  
 And the lure of what is call'd heaven is little or nothing  
 to me ;  
 Dear camerado ! I confess I have urged you onward  
 with me, and still urge you, without the least idea  
 what is our destination,  
 Or whether we shall be victorious, or utterly quell'd  
 and defeated.

## TO A CERTAIN CIVILIAN

DID you ask dulcet rhymes from me ?  
 Did you seek the civilian's peaceful and languishing  
 rhymes ?  
 Did you find what I sang erewhile so hard to follow ?  
 Why I was not singing erewhile for you to follow, to  
 understand—nor am I now ;  
 (I have been born of the same as the war was born,  
 The drum-corps' rattle is ever to me sweet music, I love  
 well the martial dirge,  
 With slow wail and convulsive throb leading the officer's  
 funeral ;)   
 What to such as you anyhow such a poet as I ? there-  
 fore leave my works,  
 And go lull yourself with what you can understand, and  
 with piano-tunes,  
 For I lull nobody, and you will never understand me.

## LO, VICTRESS ON THE PEAKS

Lo, Victress on the peaks,  
 Where thou with mighty brow regarding the world,  
 (The world O Libertad, that vainly conspired against  
   thee,)  
 Out of its countless beleaguering toils, after thwarting  
   them all, •  
 Dominant, with the dazzling sun around thee,  
 Flauntest now unharm'd in immortal soundness and  
   bloom—lo, in these hours supreme,  
 No poem proud, I chanting bring to thee, nor mastery's  
   rapturous verse,  
 But a cluster containing night's darkness and blood-  
   dripping wounds,  
 And psalms of the dead.

## SPIRIT WHOSE WORK IS DONE

(*Washington City, 1865*)

SPIRIT whose work is done—spirit of dreadful hours !  
 Ere departing fade from my eyes your forests of  
   bayonets ;  
 Spirit of gloomiest fears and doubts, (yet onward ever  
   unfaltering pressing,)  
 Spirit of many a solemn day and many a savage scene—  
   electric spirit,  
 That with muttering voice through the war now closed,  
   like a tireless phantom flitted,  
 Rousing the land with breath of flame, while you beat  
   and beat the drum,  
 Now as the sound of the drum, hollow and harsh to the  
   last, reverberates round me,  
 As your ranks, your immortal ranks, return, return  
   from the battles,  
 As the muskets of the young men yet lean over their  
   shoulders,  
 As I look on the bayonets bristling over their shoulders,  
 As those slanted bayonets, whole forests of them appear-  
   ing in the distance, approach and pass on, returning  
   homeward,



## 252 SPIRIT WHOSE WORK IS DONE

Moving with steady motion, swaying to and fro to the  
 right and left,  
 Evenly lightly rising and falling while the steps keep  
 time ;  
 Spirit of hours I knew, all hectic red one day, but pale  
 as death next day,  
 Touch my mouth ere you depart, press my lips close,  
 Leave me your pulses of rage—bequeath them to me—  
 fill me with currents convulsive,  
 Let them scorch and blister out of my chants when you  
 are gone,  
 Let them identify you to the future in these songs.

### ADIEU TO A SOLDIER

ADIEU O soldier,  
 You of the rude campaigning, (which we shared,)  
 The rapid march, the life of the camp,  
 The hot contention of opposing fronts, the long  
 manoeuvre,  
 Red battles with their slaughter, the stimulus, the  
 strong terrific game,  
 Spell of all brave and manly hearts, the trains of time  
 through you and like of you all fill'd,  
 With war and war's expression.

Adieu dear comrade,  
 Your mission is fulfill'd—but I, more warlike,  
 Myself and this contentious soul of mine,  
 Still on our own campaigning bound,  
 Through untried roads with ambushes opponents  
 lined,  
 Through many a sharp defeat and many a crisis, often  
 baffled,  
 Here marching, ever marching on, a war fight out—aye  
 here,  
 To fiercer, weightier battles give expression.

## TURN O LIBERTAD

TURN O Libertad, for the war is over,  
 From it and all henceforth expanding, doubting no  
     more, resolute, sweeping the world,  
 Turn from lands retrospective recording proofs of the  
     past,  
 From the singers that sing the trailing glories of the  
     past,  
 From the chants of the feudal world, the triumphs of  
     kings, slavery, caste,  
 Turn to the world, the triumphs reserv'd and to come—  
     give up that backward world,  
 Leave to the singers of hitherto, give them the trailing  
     past,  
 But what remains remains for singers for you—wars to  
     come are for you,  
 (Lo, how the wars of the past have duly inured to you,  
     and the wars of the present also inure ;) )  
 Then turn, and be not alarm'd O Libertad—turn your  
     undying face,  
 To where the future, greater than all the past,  
 Is swiftly, surely preparing for you.

## TO THE LEAVEN'D SOIL THEY TROD

To the leaven'd soil they trod calling I sing for the last,  
 (Forth from my tent emerging for good, loosing, untying  
     the tent-ropes,)

In the freshness the forenoon air, in the far-stretching  
     circuits and vistas again to peace restored,  
 To the fiery fields emanative and the endless vistas  
     beyond, to the South and the North,  
 To the leaven'd soil of the general Western world to  
     attest my songs,  
 To the Alleghanian hills and the tireless Mississippi,  
 To the rocks I calling sing, and all the trees in the  
     woods,  
 To the plains of the poems of heroes, to the prairies  
     spreading wide,

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To the far-off sea and the unseen winds, and the sane  
impalpable air ;

And responding they answer all, (but not in words,)  
The average earth, the witness of war and peace,  
acknowledges mutely, .

The prairie draws me close, as the father to bosom broad  
the son,

The Northern ice and rain that began me nourish me  
to the end,

But the hot sun of the South is to fully ripen my songs.

# MEMORIES OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN

## WHEN LILACS LAST IN THE DOORYARD BLOOM'D

### 1

WHEN lilacs last in the dooryard bloom'd,  
And the great star early droop'd in the western sky  
in the night,  
I mourn'd, and yet shall mourn with ever-returning  
spring.

Ever-returning spring, trinity sure to me you bring,  
Lilac blooming perennial and drooping star in the west,  
And thought of him I love.

### 2

O powerful western fallen star !  
O shades of night—O moody, tearful night !  
O great star disappear'd—O the black murk that hides  
the star !  
O cruel hands that hold me powerless—O helpless soul  
of me !  
O harsh surrounding cloud that will not free my soul.

### 3

In the dooryard fronting an old farm-house near the  
white-wash'd palings,  
Stands the lilac-bush tall-growing with heart-shaped  
leaves of rich green,  
With many a pointed blossom rising delicate, with the  
perfume strong I love,  
With every leaf a miracle—and from this bush in the  
dooryard,  
With delicate-colour'd blossoms and heart-shaped  
leaves of rich green,  
A sprig with its flower I break.

## 4

In the swamp in secluded recesses,  
A shy and hidden bird is warbling a song.  
Solitary the thrush,  
The hermit withdrawn to himself, avoiding the settle-  
ments,  
Sings by himself a song.  
Song of the bleeding throat,  
Death's outlet song of life, (for well dear brother I  
know,  
If thou wast not granted to sing thou would'st surely  
die.)

## 5

Over the breast of the spring, the land, amid cities,  
Amid lanes and through old woods, where lately the  
violets peep'd from the ground, spotting the grey  
débris,  
Amid the grass in the fields each side of the lanes,  
passing the endless grass,  
Passing the yellow-spear'd wheat, every grain from its  
shroud in the dark-brown fields uprisen,  
Passing the apple-tree blows of white and pink in the  
orchards,  
Carrying a corpse to where it shall rest in the grave,  
Night and day journeys a coffin.

## 6

Coffin that passes through lanes and streets,  
Through day and night with the great cloud darkening  
the land,  
With the pomp of the inloop'd flags with the cities  
draped in black,  
With the show of the States themselves as of crape-  
veil'd women standing,  
With processions long and winding and the flambeaus of  
the night,  
With the countless torches lit, with the silent sea of  
faces and the unbared heads,

With the waiting depôt, the arriving coffin, and the  
sombre faces,  
With dirges through the night, with the thousand  
voices rising strong and solemn,  
With all the mournful voices of the dirges pour'd around  
the coffin,  
The dim-lit churches and the shuddering organs—  
where amid these you journey,  
With the tolling tolling bells' perpetual clang,  
Here, coffin that slowly passes,  
I give you my sprig of lilac.

## 7

(Nor for you, for one alone,  
Blossoms and branches green to coffins all I bring,  
For fresh as the morning, thus would I chant a song for  
you O sane and sacred death.

All over bouquets of roses,  
O death, I cover you over with roses and early lilies,  
But mostly and now the lilac that blooms the first,  
Copious I break, I break the sprigs from the bushes,  
With loaded arms I come, pouring for you,  
For you and the coffins all of you O death.)

## 8

O western orb sailing the heaven,  
Now I know what you must have meant as a month  
since I walk'd,  
As I walk'd in silence the transparent shadowy night,  
As I saw you had something to tell as you bent to me  
night after night,  
As you droop'd from the sky low down as if to my side,  
(while the other stars all look'd on,)  
As we wander'd together the solemn night, (for some-  
thing I know not what kept me from sleep,)  
As the night advanced, and I saw on the rim of the west  
how full you were of woe,  
As I stood on the rising ground in the breeze in the cool  
transparent night,

As I watch'd where you pass'd and was lost in the  
netherward black of the night,  
As my soul in its trouble dissatisfied sank, as where you  
sad orb,  
Concluded, dropt in the night, and was gone.

## 9

Sing on there in the swamp,  
O singer bashful and tender, I hear your notes, I hear  
your call,  
I hear, I come presently, I understand you,  
But a moment I linger, for the lustrous star has detain'd  
me,  
The star my departing comrade holds and detains me.

## 10

O how shall I warble myself for the dead one there I  
loved ?  
And how shall I deck my song for the large sweet soul  
that has gone ?  
And what shall my perfume be for the grave of him  
I love ?

Sea-winds blown from east and west,  
Blown from the Eastern sea and blown from the  
Western sea, till there on the prairies meeting,  
These and with these and the breath of my chant,  
I'll perfume the grave of him I love.

## 11

O what shall I hang on the chamber walls ?  
And what shall the pictures be that I hang on the walls,  
To adorn the burial-house of him I love ?

Pictures of growing spring and farms and homes,  
With the Fourth-month eve at sundown, and the grey  
smoke lucid and bright,  
With floods of the yellow gold of the gorgeous, indolent,  
sinking sun, burning, expanding the air,

With the fresh sweet herbage under foot, and the pale  
green leaves of the trees prolific,  
In the distance the flowing glaze, the breast of the river,  
with a wind-dapple here and there,  
With ranging hills on the banks, with many a line  
against the sky, and shadows,  
And the city at hand with dwellings so dense, and  
stacks of chimneys,  
And all the scenes of life and the workshops, and the  
workmen homeward returning.

## 12

Lo, body and soul—this land,  
My own Manhattan with spires, and the sparkling and  
hurrying tides, and the ships,  
The varied and ample land, the South and the North  
in the light, Ohio's shores and flashing Missouri,  
And ever the far-spreading prairies cover'd with grass  
and corn.

Lo, the most excellent sun so calm and haughty,  
The violet and purple morn with just-felt breezes,  
The gentle soft-born measureless light,  
The miracle spreading bathing all, the fulfill'd noon,  
The coming eve delicious, the welcome night and the  
stars,  
Over my cities shining all, enveloping man and land.

## 13

Sing on, sing on you grey-brown bird.  
Sing from the swamps, the recesses, pour your chant  
from the bushes,  
Limitless out of the dusk, out of the cedars and pines.  
Sing on dearest brother, warble your reedy song,  
Loud human song, with voice of uttermost woe.  
O liquid and free and tender !  
O wild and loose to my soul—O wondrous singer !  
You only I hear—yet the star holds me, (but will soon  
depart,)  
Yet the lilac with mastering odour holds me.



## 14

Now while I sat in the day and look'd forth,  
In the close of the day with its light and the fields of  
spring, and the farmers preparing their crops,  
In the large unconscious scenery of my land with its  
lakes and forests,  
In the heavenly aerial beauty, (after the perturb'd  
winds and the storms,)   
Under the arching heavens of the afternoon swift  
passing, and the voices of children and women,  
The many-moving sea-tides, and I saw the ships how  
they sail'd,  
And the summer approaching with richness, and the  
fields all busy with labour,  
And the infinite separate houses, how they all went  
on, each with its meals and minutia of daily usages,  
And the streets how their throbbings throb'd, and the  
cities pent—lo, then and there,  
Falling upon them all and among them all, enveloping  
me with the rest,  
Appear'd the cloud, appear'd the long black trail,  
And I knew death, its thought, and the sacred know-  
ledge of death.  
  
Then with the knowledge of death as walking one side  
of me,  
And the thought of death close-walking the other side  
of me,  
And I in the middle as with companions, and as holding  
the hands of companions,  
I fled forth to the hiding receiving night that talks not,  
Down to the shores of the water, the path by the swamp  
in the dimness,  
To the solemn shadowy cedars and' ghostly pines so  
still.  
  
And the singer so shy to the rest receiv'd me,  
The grey-brown bird I know receiv'd us comrades three,  
And he sang the carol of death, and a verse for him  
I love.

From deep secluded recesses,  
From the fragrant cedars and the ghostly pines so still,  
Came the carol of the bird.

And the charm of the carol rapt me,  
As I held as if by their hands my comrades in the  
    night,  
And the voice of my spirit tallied the song of the bird.

*Come lovely and soothing death,  
Undulate round the world, serenely arriving, arriving,  
In the day, in the night, to all, to each,  
Sooner or later delicate death.*

*Prais'd be the fathomless universe,  
For life and joy, and for objects and knowledge curious,  
And for love, sweet love—but praise! praise! praise!  
For the sure-enwinding arms of cool-enfolding death.*

*Dark mother always gliding near with soft feet,  
Have none chanted for thee a chant of fullest welcome?  
Then I chant it for thee, I glorify thee above all,  
I bring thee a song that when thou must indeed come, come  
    unfalteringly.*

*Approach strong deliveress.  
When it is so, when thou hast taken them I joyously sing  
    the dead,  
Lost in the loving floating ocean of thee,  
Laved in the flood of thy bliss O death.*

*From me to thee glad serenades,  
Dances for thee I propose saluting thee, adornments and  
    feastings for thee,  
And the sights of the open landscape and the high-spread  
    sky are fitting,  
And life and the fields, and the huge and thoughtful night.*

*The night in silence under many a star,  
The ocean shore and the husky whispering wave whose  
    voice I know,  
And the soul turning to thee O vast and well-veil'd death,  
And the body gratefully nestling close to thee.*

*Over the tree-tops I float thee a song,  
Over the rising and sinking waves, over the myriad  
fields and the prairies wide,  
Over the dense-pack'd cities all and the teeming wharves  
and ways,  
I float this carol with joy, with joy to thee O death.*

## 15

To the tally of my soul,  
Loud and strong kept up the grey-brown bird,  
With pure deliberate notes spreading filling the night.

Loud in the pines and cedars dim,  
Clear in the freshness moist and the swamp-perfume,  
And I with my comrades there in the night.

While my sight that was bound in my eyes unclosed,  
As to long panoramas of visions.

And I saw askant the armies,  
I saw as in noiseless dreams hundreds of battle-flags,  
Borne through the smoke of the battles and pierc'd with  
missiles I saw them,  
And carried hither and yon through the smoke, and  
torn and bloody,  
And at last but a few shreds left on the staffs, (and all in  
silence,)  
And all the staffs all splinter'd and broken.

I saw battle-corpses, myriads of them,  
And the white skeletons of young men, I saw them,  
I saw the débris and débris of all the slain soldiers of  
the war,  
But I saw they were not as was thought,  
They themselves were fully at rest, they suffer'd not,  
The living remain'd and suffer'd, the mother suffer'd,  
And the wife and the child and the musing comrade  
suffer'd,  
And the armies that remain'd suffer'd.

## 16

Passing the visions, passing the night,  
Passing, unloosing the hold of my comrades' hands,  
Passing the song of the hermit bird and the tallying  
    song of my soul,  
Victorious song, death's outlet song, yet varying ever-  
    altering song,  
As low and wailing, yet clear the notes, rising and  
    falling, flooding the night,  
Sadly sinking and fainting, as warning and warning,  
    and yet again bursting with joy,  
Covering the earth and filling the spread of the heaven,  
As that powerful psalm in the night I heard from  
    recesses,  
Passing, I leave thee lilac with heart-shaped leaves,  
I leave thee there in the dooryard, blooming, returning  
    with spring.

I cease from my song for thee,  
From my gaze on thee in the west, fronting the west,  
    communing with thee,  
O comrade lustrous with silver face in the night.

Yet each to keep and all, retrievements out of the night,  
The song, the wondrous chant of the grey-brown bird,  
And the tallying chant, the echo arous'd in my soul,  
With the lustrous and drooping star with the counte-  
    nance full of woe,  
With the holders holding my hand nearing the call of  
    the bird,  
Comrades mine and I in the midst, and their memory  
    ever to keep, for the dead I loved so well,  
For the sweetest, wisest soul of all my days and lands—  
    and this for his dear sake,  
Lilac and star and bird twined with the chant of my  
    soul,  
There in the fragrant pines and the cedars dusk and  
    dim.

## O CAPTAIN ! MY CAPTAIN !

O CAPTAIN ! my Captain ! our fearful trip is done,  
The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought  
is won,

The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,  
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and  
daring ;

But O heart ! heart ! heart !

O the bleeding drops of red,

Where on the deck my Captain lies,

Fallen cold and dead.

O Captain ! my Captain ! rise up and hear the bells ;  
Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle  
trills,

For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths—for you the  
shores a-crowding,

For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces  
turning ;

Here Captain ! dear father !

This arm beneath your head !

It is some dream that on the deck,

You've fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and  
still,

My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor  
will,

The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed  
and done,

From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object  
won ;

Exult O shores, and ring O bells !

But I with mournful tread,

Walk the deck my Captain lies,

Fallen cold and dead.

## HUSH'D BE THE CAMPS TO-DAY

(May 4, 1865)

HUSH'D be the camps to-day,  
 And soldiers let us drape our war-worn weapons,  
 And each with musing soul retire to celebrate,  
 Our dear commander's death.

No more for him life's stormy conflicts,  
 Nor victory, nor defeat—no more time's dark events,  
 Charging like ceaseless clouds across the sky.

But sing poet in our name,  
 Sing of the love we bore him—because you, dweller in  
       camps, know it truly.

As they invault the coffin there,  
 Sing—as they close the doors of earth upon him—one  
       verse,  
 For the heavy hearts of soldiers.

## THIS DUST WAS ONCE THE MAN

THIS dust was once the man,  
 Gentle, plain, just and resolute, under whose cautious  
       hand,  
 Against the foulest crime in history known in any land  
       or age,  
 Was saved the Union of these States.

# BY BLUE ONTARIO'S SHORE

## 1

By blue Ontario's shore,  
As I mused of these warlike days and of peace return'd,  
    and the dead that return no more,  
A Phantom gigantic superb, with stern visage accosted  
    me,  
*Chant me the poem, it said, that comes from the soul of  
    America, chant me the carol of victory,  
And strike up the marches of the Libertad, marches more  
    powerful yet,  
And sing me before you go the song of the throes of  
    Democracy.*  
(Democracy, the destin'd conqueror, yet treacherous  
    lip-smiles everywhere,  
And death and infidelity at every step.)

## 2

A Nation announcing itself,  
I myself make the only growth by which I can be  
    appreciated,  
I reject none, accept all, then reproduce all in my own  
    forms.  
A breed whose proof is in time and deeds,  
What we are we are, nativity is answer enough to  
    objections,  
We wield ourselves as a weapon is wielded,  
We are powerful and tremendous in ourselves,  
We are executive in ourselves, we are sufficient in the  
    variety of ourselves,  
We are the most beautiful to ourselves and in our-  
    selves,  
We stand self-pois'd in the middle, branching thence  
    over the world,  
From Missouri, Nebraska, or Kansas, laughing attacks  
    to scorn.

Nothing is sinful to us outside of ourselves,  
Whatever appears, whatever does not appear, we are  
beautiful or sinful in ourselves only.

(O Mother—O Sisters dear !

If we are lost, no victor else has destroy'd us,  
It is by ourselves we go down to eternal night.) ❧

## 3

Have you thought there could be but a single supreme ?  
There can be any number of supremes—one does not  
countervail another any more than one eyesight  
countervails another, or one life countervails  
another.

All is eligible to all,  
All is for individuals, all is for you,  
No condition is prohibited, not God's or any.

All comes by the body, only health puts you rapport  
with the universe.

Produce great Persons, the rest follows.

## 4

Piety and conformity to them that like,  
Peace, obesity, allegiance, to them that like,  
I am he who tauntingly compels men, women,  
nations,  
Crying, Leap from your seats and contend for your  
lives !

I am he who walks the States with a barb'd tongue,  
questioning every one I meet,  
Who are you that wanted only to be told what you  
knew before ?  
Who are you that wanted only a book to join you in  
your nonsense ?

(With pangs and cries as thine own O bearer of many  
children,  
These clamours wild to a race of pride I give.)



O lands, would you be freer than all that has ever been  
before ?

If you would be freer than all that has been before,  
come listen to me.

Fear grace, elegance, civilization, delicatessen,  
Fear the mellow sweet, the sucking of honey-juice,  
Beware the advancing mortal ripening of Nature,  
Beware what precedes the decay of the ruggedness of  
states and men.

## 5

Ages, precedents, have long been accumulating un-  
directed materials,

America brings builders, and brings its own styles.

The immortal poets of Asia and Europe have done their  
work and pass'd to other spheres,

A work remains, the work of surpassing all they have  
done.

America, curious toward foreign characters, stands by  
its own at all hazards,

Stands removed, spacious, composite, sound, initiates  
the true use of precedents,

Does not repel them or the past or what they have  
produced under their forms,

Takes the lesson with calmness, perceives the corpse  
slowly borne from the house,

Perceives that it waits a little while in the door, that  
it was fittest for its days,

That its life has descended to the stalwart and well-  
shaped heir who approaches,

And that he shall be fittest for his days.

Any period one nation must lead,

One land must be the promise and reliance of the future.

These States are the amplest poem,

Here is not merely a nation but a teeming Nation of  
nations,

Here the doings of men correspond with the broadcast  
doings of the day and night,

Here is what moves in magnificent masses careless of  
particulars,  
Here are the roughs, beards, friendliness, combative-  
ness, the soul loves,  
Here the flowing trains, here the crowds, equality,  
diversity, the soul loves.

## 6

Land of lands and bards to corroborate !  
Of them standing among them, one lifts to the light  
a west-bred face,  
To him the hereditary countenance bequeath'd both  
mother's and father's,  
His first parts substances, earth, water, animals, trees,  
Built of the common stock, having room for far and  
near,  
Used to dispense with other lands, incarnating this  
land,  
Attracting it body and soul to himself, hanging on its  
neck with incomparable love,  
Plunging his seminal muscle into its merits and  
demerits,  
Making its cities, beginnings, events, diversities, wars,  
vocal in him,  
Making its rivers, lakes, bays, embouchure in him,  
Mississippi with yearly freshets and changing chutes,  
Columbia, Niagara, Hudson, spending themselves  
lovingly in him,  
If the Atlantic coast stretch or the Pacific coast stretch,  
he stretching with them North or South,  
Spanning between them East and West, and touching  
whatever is between them,  
Growths growing from him to offset the growths of  
pine, cedar, hemlock, live-oak, locust, chestnut,  
hickory, cottonwood, orange, magnolia,  
Tangles as tangled in him as any canebrake or swamp,  
He likening sides and peaks of mountains, forests coated  
with northern transparent ice,  
Off him pasturage sweet and natural as savanna, upland,  
prairie,

Through him flights, whirls, screams, answering those of  
the fish-hawk, mocking-bird, night-heron, and eagle,  
His spirit surrounding his country's spirit, unclosed to  
good and evil,  
Surrounding the essences of real things, old times and  
present times,  
Surrounding just found shores, islands, tribes of red  
aborigines,  
Weather-beaten vessels, landings, settlements, embryo  
stature and muscle,  
The haughty defiance of the Year One, war, peace, the  
formation of the Constitution,  
The separate States, the simple elastic scheme, the  
immigrants,  
The Union always swarming with blatherers and always  
sure and impregnable,  
The unsurvey'd interior, log-houses, clearings, wild  
animals, hunters, trappers,  
Surrounding the multiform agriculture, mines, tempera-  
ture, the gestation of new States,  
Congress convening every Twelfth-month, the members  
duly coming up from the uttermost parts,  
Surrounding the noble character of mechanics and  
farmers, especially the young men,  
Responding their manners, speech, dress, friendships,  
the gait they have of persons who never knew  
how it felt to stand in the presence of superiors,  
The freshness and candour of their physiognomy, the  
copiousness and decision of their phrenology,  
The picturesque looseness of their carriage, their fierce-  
ness when wrong'd,  
The fluency of their speech, their delight in music, their  
curiosity, good temper and open-handedness, the  
whole composite make,  
The prevailing ardour and enterprise, the large amative-  
ness,  
The perfect equality of the female with the male, the  
fluid movement of the population,  
The superior marine, free commerce, fisheries, whaling,  
gold-digging,

Wharf-hemm'd cities, railroad and steamboat lines  
 intersecting all points,  
 Factories, mercantile life, labour-saving machinery, the  
 North-East, North-West, South-West,  
 Manhattan firemen, the Yankee swap, southern planta-  
 tion life,  
 Slavery—the murderous, treacherous conspiracy to  
 raise it upon the ruins of all the rest,  
 On and on to the grapple with it—Assassin ! then your  
 life or ours be the stake, and respite no more.

7

(Lo, high toward heaven, this day,  
 Libertad, from the conqueress' field return'd,  
 I mark the new aureola around your head,  
 No more of soft astral, but dazzling and fierce,  
 With war's flames and the lambent lightnings playing,  
 And your port immovable where you stand,  
 With still the inextinguishable glance and the clinch'd  
 and lifted fist,  
 And your foot on the neck of the menacing one, the  
 scorner utterly crush'd beneath you,  
 The menacing arrogant one that strode and advanced  
 with his senseless scorn, bearing the murderous  
 knife,  
 The wide-swelling one, the braggart that would yester-  
 day do so much,  
 To-day a carrion dead and damn'd, the despised of all  
 the earth,  
 An offal rank, to the dunghill maggots spurn'd.)

8

Others take finish, but the Republic is ever constructive  
 and ever keeps vista,  
 Others adorn the past, but you O days of the present,  
 I adorn you,  
 O days of the future I believe in you—I isolate myself  
 for your sake,  
 O America because you build for mankind I build for  
 you,

O well-beloved stone-cutters, I lead them who plan  
 with decision and science,  
 Lead the present with friendly hand toward the future.  
 (Bravas to all impulses sending sane children to the  
 next age !  
 But damn that which spends itself with no thought of  
 the stain, pains, dismay, feebleness, it is bequeath-  
 ing.)

## 9

I listened to the Phantom by Ontario's shore,  
 I heard the voice arising demanding bards,  
 By them all native and grand, by them alone can these  
 States be fused into the compact organism of  
 a Nation.

To hold men together by paper and seal or by com-  
 pulsion is no account,  
 That only holds men together which aggregates all in  
 a living principle, as the hold of the limbs of the  
 body or the fibres of plants.

Of all races and eras these States with veins full of  
 poetical stuff most need poets, and are to have the  
 greatest, and use them the greatest,  
 Their Presidents shall not be their common referee so  
 much as their poets shall.

(Soul of love and tongue of fire !  
 Eye to pierce the deepest deeps and sweep the world !  
 Ah Mother, prolific and full in all besides, yet how long  
 barren, barren ?)

## 10

Of these States the poet is the equable man,  
 Not in him but off from him things are grotesque,  
 eccentric, fail of their full returns,  
 Nothing out of its place is good, nothing in its place is  
 bad,  
 He bestows on every object or quality its fit proportion,  
 neither more nor less,  
 He is the arbiter of the diverse, he is the key,

He is the equalizer of his age and land,  
He supplies what wants supplying, he checks what  
wants checking,

In peace out of him speaks the spirit of peace, large,  
rich, thrifty, building populous towns, encouraging  
agriculture, arts, commerce, lighting the study of  
man, the soul, health, immortality, government,

In war he is the best backer of the war, he fetches  
artillery as good as the engineer's, he can make  
every word he speaks draw blood,

The years straying toward infidelity he withholds by  
his steady faith,

He is no arguer, he is judgement, (Nature accepts him  
absolutely,)

He judges not as the judge judges but as the sun falling  
round a helpless thing,

As he sees the farthest he has the most faith,

His thoughts are the hymns of the praise of things,

In the dispute on God and eternity he is silent,

He sees eternity less like a play with a prologue and  
dénouement,

He sees eternity in men and women, he does not see  
men and women as dreams or dots.

For the great Idea, the idea of perfect and free in-  
dividuals,

For that, the bard walks in advance, leader of leaders,  
The attitude of him cheers up slaves and horrifies  
foreign despots.

Without extinction is Liberty, without retrograde is  
Equality,

They live in the feelings of young men and the best  
women,

(Not for nothing have the indomitable heads of the  
earth been always ready to fall for Liberty.)

For the great Idea,  
That, O my brethren, that is the mission of poets.

Songs of stern defiance ever ready,  
Songs of the rapid arming and the march,  
The flag of peace quick-folded, and instead the flag we  
    know,  
Warlike flag of the great Idea.  
(Angry cloth I saw there leaping !  
I stand again in leaden rain your flapping folds saluting,  
I sing you over all, flying beckoning through the fight  
    —O the hard-contested fight !  
The cannons ope their rosy-flashing muzzles—the  
    hurtled balls scream,  
The battle-front forms amid the smoke—the volleys  
    pour incessant from the line;  
Hark, the ringing word *Charge* !—now the tussle and  
    the furious maddening yells,  
Now the corpses tumble curl'd upon the ground,  
Cold, cold in death, for precious life of you,  
Angry cloth I saw there leaping.)

## 12

Are you he who would assume a place to teach or be  
    a poet here in the States ?  
The place is august, the terms obdurate.  
Who would assume to teach here may well prepare  
    himself body and mind,  
He may well survey, ponder, arm, fortify, harden, make  
    lithic himself,  
He shall surely be question'd beforehand by me with  
    many and stern questions.  
Who are you indeed who would talk or sing to  
    America ?  
Have you studied out the land, its idioms and men ?  
Have you learn'd the physiology, phrenology, politics,  
    geography, pride, freedom, friendship of the land ?  
    its substratums and objects ?  
Have you consider'd the organic compact of the first  
    day of the first year of Independence, sign'd by  
    the Commissioners, ratified by the States, and read  
    by Washington at the head of the army ?

Have you possess'd yourself of the Federal Constitution ?

Do you see who have left all feudal processes and poems behind them, and assumed the poems and processes of Democracy ?

Are you faithful to things ? do you teach what the land and sea, the bodies of men, womanhood, amateness, heroic angers, teach ?

Have you sped through fleeting customs, popularities ? Can you hold your hand against all seductions, follies, whirls, fierce contentions ? are you very strong ? are you really of the whole People ?

Are you not of some coterie ? some school or mere religion ?

Are you done with reviews and criticisms of life ? animating now to life itself ?

Have you vivified yourself from the maternity of these States ?

Have you too the old ever-fresh forbearance and impartiality ?

Do you hold the like love for those hardening to maturity ? for the last-born ? little and big ? and for the errant ?

What is this you bring my America ?

Is it uniform with my country ?

Is it not something that has been better told or done before ?

Have you not imported this or the spirit of it in some ship ?

Is it not a mere tale ? a rhyme ? a prettiness ?—is the good old cause in it ?

Has it not dangled long at the heels of the poets, politicians, literats, of enemies' lands ?

Does it not assume that what is notoriously gone is still here ?

Does it answer universal needs ? will it improve manners ?

Does it sound with trumpet-voice the proud victory of the Union in that secession war ?



Can your performance face the open fields and the  
seaside ?

Will it absorb into me as I absorb food, air, to appear  
again in my strength, gait, face ?

Have real employments contributed to it ? original  
makers, not mere amanuenses ?

Does it meet modern discoveries, calibres, facts, face to  
face ?

What does it mean to American persons, progresses,  
cities ? Chicago, Kanada, Arkansas ?

Does it see behind the apparent custodians the real  
custodians standing, menacing, silent, the me-  
chanics, Manhattanese, Western men, Southerners,  
significant alike in their apathy, and in the prompt-  
ness of their love ?

Does it see what finally befalls, and has always finally  
befallen, each temporizer, patcher, outsider,  
partialist, alarmist, infidel, who has ever ask'd  
any thing of America ?

What mocking and scornful negligence ?

The track strew'd with the dust of skeletons,

By the roadside others disdainfully toss'd.

## 13

Rhymes and rhymers pass away, poems distill'd from  
poems pass away,

The swarms of reflectors and the polite pass, and leave  
ashes,

Admirers, importers, obedient persons, make but the  
soil of literature,

America justifies itself, give it time, no disguise can  
deceive it or conceal from it, it is impassive  
enough,

Only toward the likes of itself will it advance to meet  
them,

If its poets appear it will in due time advance to meet  
them, there is no fear of mistake,

(The proof of a poet shall be sternly deferr'd till his  
country absorbs him as affectionately as he has  
absorb'd it.)

He masters whose spirit masters, he tastes sweetest  
who results sweetest in the long run,  
The blood of the brawn beloved of time is unconstraint ;  
In the need of songs, philosophy, an appropriate native  
grand-opera, shipcraft, any craft,  
He or she is greatest who contributes the greatest  
original practical example.

Already a nonchalant breed, silently emerging, appears  
on the streets,  
People's lips salute only doers, lovers, satisfiers, positive  
knowers,  
There will shortly be no more priests, I say their work  
is done,  
Death is without emergencies here, but life is perpetual  
emergencies here,  
Are your body, days, manners, superb ? after death  
you shall be superb,  
Justice, health, self-esteem, clear the way with irresist-  
ible power ;  
How dare you place anything before a man ?

## 14

Fall behind me States !  
A man before all—myself, typical, before all.  
Give me the pay I have served for,  
Give me to sing the songs of the great Idea, take all  
the rest,  
I have loved the earth, sun, animals, I have despised  
riches,  
I have given alms to every one that ask'd, stood up  
for the stupid and crazy, devoted my income and  
labour to others,  
Hated tyrants, argued not concerning God, had patience  
and indulgence toward the people, taken off my  
hat to nothing known or unknown,  
Gone freely with powerful uneducated persons and  
with the young, and with the mothers of families,  
Read these leaves to myself in the open air, tried them  
by trees, stars, rivers,

Dismiss'd whatever insulted my own soul or defiled my  
body,  
Claim'd nothing to myself which I have not carefully  
claim'd for others on the same terms,  
Sped to the camps, and comrades found and accepted  
from every State,  
(Upon this breast has many a dying soldier lean'd to  
breathe his last,  
This arm, this hand, this voice, have nourish'd, rais'd,  
restored,  
To life recalling many a prostrate form ;)  
I am willing to wait to be understood by the growth  
of the taste of myself,  
Rejecting none, permitting all.  
(Say O Mother, have I not to your thought been  
faithful ?  
Have I not through life kept you and yours before me ?)

## 15

I swear I begin to see the meaning of these things,  
It is not the earth, it is not America who is so great,  
It is I who am great or to be great, it is You up there,  
or any one,  
It is to walk rapidly through civilizations, govern-  
ments, theories,  
Through poems, pageants, shows, to form individuals.  
Underneath all, individuals,  
I swear nothing is good to me now that ignores indivi-  
duals,  
The American compact is altogether with individuals,  
The only government is that which makes minute of  
individuals,  
The whole theory of the universe is directed unerringly  
to one single individual—namely to You.  
(Mother ! with subtle sense severe, with the naked  
sword in your hand,  
I saw you at last refuse to treat but directly with  
individuals.)

## 16

Underneath all, Nativity,  
I swear I will stand by my own nativity, pious or  
impious so be it ;  
I swear I am charm'd with nothing except nativity,  
Men, women, cities, nations, are only beautiful from  
nativity.

Underneath all is the Expression of love for men and  
women,  
(I swear I have seen enough of mean and impotent  
modes of expressing love for men and women,  
After this day I take my own modes of expressing love  
for men and women.)

I swear I will have each quality of my race in myself,  
(Talk as you like, he only suits these States whose  
manners favour the audacity and sublime turbu-  
lence of the States.)

Underneath the lessons of things, spirits, Nature,  
governments, ownerships, I swear I perceive other  
lessons,

Underneath all to me is myself, to you yourself, (the same  
monotonous old song.)

## 17

O I see flashing that this America is only you and me,  
Its power, weapons, testimony, are you and me,  
Its crimes, lies, thefts, defections, are you and me,  
Its Congress is you and me, the officers, capitols,  
armies, ships, are you and me,  
Its endless gestations of new States are you and me,  
The war, (that war so bloody and grim, the war I will  
henceforth forget,) was you and me,  
Natural and artificial are you and me,  
Freedom, language, poems, employments, are you and  
me,  
Past, present, future, are you and me.

I dare not shirk any part of myself,  
Not any part of America good or bad,

Not to build for that which builds for mankind,  
Not to balance ranks, complexions, creeds, and the sexes,  
Not to justify science nor the march of equality,  
Nor to feed the arrogant blood of the brawn belov'd of  
time.

I am for those that have never been master'd,  
For men and women whose tempers have never been  
master'd,  
For those whom laws, theories, conventions, can never  
master.

I am for those who walk abreast with the whole earth,  
Who inaugurate one to inaugurate all.

I will not be outfaced by irrational things,  
I will penetrate what it is in them that is sarcastic  
upon me,  
I will make cities and civilizations defer to me,  
This is what I have learnt from America—it is the  
amount, and it I teach again.

(Democracy, while weapons were everywhere aim'd at  
your breast,  
I saw you serenely give birth to immortal children,  
saw in dreams your dilating form,  
Saw you with spreading mantle covering the world.)

## 18

I will confront these shows of the day and night,  
I will know if I am to be less than they,  
I will see if I am not as majestic as they,  
I will see if I am not as subtle and real as they,  
I will see if I am to be less generous than they,  
I will see if I have no meaning, while the houses and  
ships have meaning,  
I will see if the fishes and birds are to be enough for  
themselves, and I am not to be enough for myself.  
I match my spirit against yours you orbs, growths,  
mountains, brutes,  
Copious as you are I absorb you all in myself, and  
become the master myself,

America isolated yet embodying all, what is it finally  
except myself ?

These States, what are they except myself ?

I know now why the earth is gross, tantalizing, wicked,  
it is for my sake,

I take you specially to be mine, you terrible, rude  
forms.

(Mother, bend down, bend close to me your face,  
I know not what these plots and wars and deferments  
are for,

I know not fruition's success, but I know that through  
war and crime your work goes on, and must yet  
go on.)

19

Thus by blue Ontario's shore,  
While the winds fann'd me and the waves came  
trooping toward me,  
I thrill'd with the power's pulsations, and the charm of  
my theme was upon me,  
Till the tissues that held me parted their ties upon me.

And I saw the free souls of poets,  
The loftiest bards of past ages strode before me,  
Strange large men, long unwaked, undisclosed, were  
disclosed to me.

20

O my rapt verse, my call, mock me not !  
Not for the bards of the past, not to invoke them have  
I launch'd you forth,  
Not to call even those lofty bards here by Ontario's  
shores,  
Have I sung so capricious and loud my savage song.

Bards for my own land only I invoke,  
(For the war the war is over, the field is clear'd,)  
Till they strike up marches henceforth triumphant and  
onward,  
To cheer O Mother your boundless expectant soul.

Bards of the great Idea ! bards of the peaceful inventions ! (for the war, the war is over !)

Yet bards of latent armies, a million soldiers waiting ever-ready,

Bards with songs as from burning coals or the lightning's fork'd stripes !

Ample Ohio's, Kanada's bards—bards of California !  
inland bards—bards of the war !

You by my charm I invoke.

## AUTUMN RIVULETS

### THERE WAS A CHILD WENT FORTH

THERE was a child went forth every day,  
And the first object he look'd upon, that object he  
became,  
And that object became part of him for the day or  
a certain part of the day,  
Or for many years or stretching cycles of years.

The early lilacs became part of this child,  
And grass and white and red morning-glories, and  
white and red clover, and the song of the phœbe-  
bird,  
And the Third-month lambs and the sow's pink-faint  
litter, and the mare's foal and the cow's calf,  
And the noisy brood of the barnyard or by the mire of  
the pond-side,  
And the fish suspending themselves so curiously below  
there, and the beautiful curious liquid,  
And the water-plants with their graceful flat heads, all  
became part of him.

The field-sprouts of Fourth-month and Fifth-month  
became part of him,  
Winter-grain sprouts and those of the light-yellow corn,  
and the esculent roots of the garden,  
And the apple-trees cover'd with blossoms and the  
fruit afterward, and wood-berries, and the com-  
monest weeds by the road,  
And the old drunkard staggering home from the  
outhouse of the tavern whence he had lately  
risen,  
And the schoolmistress that pass'd on her way to the  
school,



## 284 THERE WAS A CHILD WENT FORTH

And the friendly boys that pass'd, and the quarrelsome  
 boys,  
 And the tidy and fresh-cheek'd girls, and the barefoot  
 negro boy and girl,  
 And all the changes of city and country wherever he  
 went.

His own parents, he that had father'd him and she that  
 had conceiv'd him in her womb and birth'd him,  
 They gave this child more of themselves than that,  
 They gave him afterward every day, they became part  
 of him.

The mother at home quietly placing the dishes on the  
 supper-table,

The mother with mild words, clean her cap and gown,  
 a wholesome odour falling off her person and clothes  
 as she walks by,

The father, strong, self-sufficient, manly, mean, anger'd,  
 unjust,

The blow, the quick loud word, the tight bargain, the  
 crafty lure,

The family usages, the language, the company, the  
 furniture, the yearning and swelling heart,

Affection that will not be gainsay'd, the sense of what  
 is real, the thought if after all it should prove  
 unreal,

The doubts of day-time and the doubts of night-time,  
 the curious whether and how,

Whether that which appears so is so, or is it all flashes  
 and specks ?

Men and women crowding fast in the streets, if they  
 are not flashes and specks what are they ?

The streets themselves and the façades of houses, and  
 goods in the windows,

Vehicles, teams, the heavy-plank'd wharves, the huge  
 crossing ~~at~~ the ferries,

The village on the highland seen from afar at sunset,  
 the river between,

Shadows, aureola and mist, the light falling on roofs  
 and gables of white or brown two miles off,

## THERE WAS A CHILD WENT FORTH 285

The schooner near by sleepily dropping down the tide,  
the little boat slack-tow'd astern,  
The hurrying tumbling waves, quick-broken crests,  
slapping,  
The strata of colour'd clouds, the long bar of maroon-  
tint away solitary by itself, the spread of purity it  
lies motionless in,  
The horizon's edge, the flying sea-crow, the fragrance  
of salt marsh and shore mud,  
These became part of that child who went forth every  
day, and who now goes, and will always go forth  
every day.

## OLD IRELAND

FAR hence amid an isle of wondrous beauty,  
Crouching over a grave an ancient sorrowful mother,  
Once a queen, now lean and tatter'd seated on the  
ground,  
Her old white hair drooping dishevell'd round her  
shoulders,  
At her feet fallen an unused royal harp,  
Long silent, she too long silent, mourning her shrouded  
hope and heir,  
Of all the earth her heart most full of sorrow because  
most full of love.

Yet a word ancient mother,  
You need crouch there no longer on the cold ground  
with forehead between your knees,  
O you need not sit there veil'd in your old white hair  
so dishevell'd,  
For know you the one you mourn is not in that  
grave,  
It was an illusion, the son you love was not really  
dead,  
The Lord is not dead, he is risen again young and  
strong in another country,  
Even while you wept there by your fallen harp by the  
grave,

What you wept for was translated, pass'd from the  
grave,  
The winds favour'd and the sea sail'd it,  
And now with rosy and new blood,  
Moves to-day in a new country.

### THE CITY DEAD-HOUSE

By the city dead-house by the gate,  
As idly sauntering wending my way from the clangor,  
I curious pause, for lo, an outcast form, a poor dead  
prostitute brought,  
Her corpse they deposit unclaim'd, it lies on the damp  
brick pavement,  
The divine woman, her body, I see the body, I look on  
it alone,  
That house once full of passion and beauty, all else  
I notice not,  
Nor stillness so cold, nor running water from faucet,  
nor odours morbidic impress me,  
But the house alone—that wondrous house—that  
delicate fair house—that ruin !  
That immortal house more than all the rows of dwell-  
lings ever built !  
Or white-domed capitol with majestic figure sur-  
mounted, or all the old high-spired cathedrals,  
That little house alone more than them all—poor,  
desperate house !  
Fair, fearful wreck—tenement of a soul—itself a soul,  
Unclaim'd, avoided house—take one breath from my  
tremulous lips,  
Take one tear dropt aside as I go for thought of you,  
Dead house of love—house of madness and sin, crum-  
bled, crush'd,  
House of life, erewhile talking and laughing—but ah,  
poor house, dead even then,  
Months, years, an echoing, garnish'd house—but dead,  
dead, dead.

## THIS COMPOST

## 1

SOMETHING startles me where I thought I was safest,  
 I withdraw from the still woods I loved,  
 I will not go now on the pastures to walk,  
 I will not strip the clothes from my body to meet my  
     lover the sea,  
 I will not touch my flesh to the earth as to other flesh  
     to renew me.

O how can it be that the ground itself does not sicken ?  
 How can you be alive you growths of spring ?  
 How can you furnish health you blood of herbs, roots,  
     orchards, grain ?  
 Are they not continually putting distemper'd corpses  
     within you ?  
 Is not every continent work'd over and over with sour  
     dead ?

Where have you disposed of their carcasses ?  
 Those drunkards and gluttons of so many generations ?  
 Where have you drawn off all the foul liquid and meat ?  
 I do not see any of it upon you to-day, or perhaps I am  
     deceiv'd,  
 I will run a furrow with my plough, I will press my  
     spade through the sod and turn it up underneath,  
 I am sure I shall expose some of the foul meat.

## 2

Behold this compost ! behold it well !  
 Perhaps every mite has once form'd part of a sick  
     person—yet behold !  
 The grass of spring covers the prairies,  
 The bean bursts noiselessly through the mould in the  
     garden,  
 The delicate spear of the onion pierces upward,  
 The apple-buds cluster together on the apple-branches,  
 The resurrection of the wheat appears with pale visage  
     out of its graves,  
 The tinge awakes over the willow-tree and the mulberry-  
     tree,

The he-birds carol mornings and evenings while the  
she-birds sit on their nests,  
The young of poultry break through the hatch'd eggs,  
The new-born of animals appear, the calf is dropt from  
the cow, the colt from the mare,  
Out of its little hill faithfully rise the potato's dark  
green leaves,  
Out of its hill rises the yellow maize-stalk, the lilacs  
bloom in the dooryards,  
The summer growth is innocent and disdainful above  
all those strata of sour dead.

What chemistry !

That the winds are really not infectious,  
That this is no cheat, this transparent green-wash of  
the sea which is so amorous after me,  
That it is safe to allow it to lick my naked body all  
over with its tongues,  
That it will not endanger me with the fevers that have  
deposited themselves in it,  
That all is clean forever and forever,  
That the cool drink from the well tastes so good,  
That blackberries are so flavoured and juicy,  
That the fruits of the apple-orchard and the orange-  
orchard, that melons, grapes, peaches, plums, will  
none of them poison me,  
That when I recline on the grass I do not catch any  
disease,  
Though probably every spear of grass rises out of what  
was once a catching disease.

Now I am terrified at the Earth, it is that calm and  
patient,  
It grows such sweet things out of such corruptions,  
It turns harmless and stainless on its axis, with such  
endless successions of diseas'd corpses,  
It distills such exquisite winds out of such infused fetor,  
It renews with such unwitting looks its prodigal,  
annual, sumptuous crops,  
It gives such divine materials to men, and accepts such  
leavings from them at last.

## TO A FOIL'D EUROPEAN REVOLUTIONAIRE

COURAGE yet, my brother or my sister !  
 Keep on—Liberty is to be subserv'd whatever occurs ;  
 That is nothing that is quell'd by one or two failures,  
     or any number of failures,  
 Or by the indifference or ingratitude of the people, or  
     by any unfaithfulness,  
 Or the show of the tushes of power, soldiers, cannon,  
     penal statutes.

What we believe in waits latent forever through all the  
     continents,  
 Invites no one, promises nothing, sits in calmness and  
     light, is positive and composed, knows no dis-  
     couragement,  
 Waiting patiently, waiting its time.

(Not songs of loyalty alone are these,  
 But songs of insurrection also,  
 For I am the sworn poet of every dauntless rebel the  
     world over,  
 And he going with me leaves peace and routine behind  
     him,  
 And stakes his life to be lost at any moment.)

The battle rages with many a loud alarm and frequent  
     advance and retreat,  
 The infidel triumphs, or supposes he triumphs,  
 The prison, scaffold, garrote, handcuffs, iron necklace  
     and lead-balls do their work,  
 The named and unnamed heroes pass to other  
     spheres,  
 The great speakers and writers are exiled, they lie sick  
     in distant lands,  
 The cause is asleep, the strongest throats are choked  
     with their own blood,  
 The young men droop their eyelashes toward the  
     ground when they meet ;  
 But for all this Liberty has not gone out of the place,  
     nor the infidel enter'd into full possession.

When liberty goes out of a place it is not the first to go, nor the second or third to go,  
It waits for all the rest to go, it is the last.

When there are no more memories of heroes and martyrs,  
And when all life and all the souls of men and women are discharged from any part of the earth,  
Then only shall liberty or the idea of liberty be discharged from that part of the earth,  
And the infidel come into full possession.

Then courage European revolter, revoltress !  
For till all ceases neither must you cease.

I do not know what you are for, (I do not know what I am for myself, nor what any thing is for,)  
But I will search carefully for it even in being foil'd,  
In defeat, poverty, misconception, imprisonment—for they too are great.

Did we think victory great ?  
So it is—but now it seems to me, when it cannot be help'd, that defeat is great,  
And that death and dismay are great.

### SONG OF PRUDENCE

MANHATTAN'S streets I saunter'd pondering,  
On Time, Space, Reality—on such as these, and abreast with them Prudence.

The last explanation always remains to be made about prudence,  
Little and large, alike drop quietly aside from the prudence that suits immortality.

The soul is of itself,  
All verges to it, all has reference to what ensues,  
All that a person does, says, thinks, is of consequence,  
Not a move can a man or woman make, that affects

him or her in a day, month, any part of the direct  
lifetime, or the hour of death,  
But the same affects him or her onward afterward  
through the indirect lifetime.

The indirect is just as much as the direct,  
The spirit receives from the body just as much as it  
gives to the body, if not more.

Not one word or deed, not venereal sore, discoloration,  
privacy of the onanist,

Putridity of gluttons or rum-drinkers, speculation,  
cunning, betrayal, murder, seduction, prostitution,  
But has results beyond death as really as before death.

Charity and personal force are the only investments  
worth any thing.

No specification is necessary, all that a male or female  
does, that is vigorous, benevolent, clean, is so  
much profit to him or her,

In the unshakable order of the universe and through  
the whole scope of it forever.

Who has been wise receives interest,  
Savage, felon, President, judge, farmer, sailor, mechanic,  
literate, young, old, it is the same,

The interest will come round—all will come round.

Singly, wholly, to affect now, affected their time, will  
forever affect, all of the past and all of the present  
and all of the future,

All the brave actions of war and peace,

All help given to relatives, strangers, the poor, old,  
sorrowful, young children, widows, the sick, and  
to shunn'd persons,

All self-denial that stood steady and aloof on wrecks,  
and saw others fill the seats of the boats,

All offering of substance or life for the good old cause,  
or for a friend's sake, or opinion's sake,

All pains of enthusiasts scoff'd at by their neighbours,  
All the limitless sweet love and precious suffering of  
mothers,

All honest men baffled in strifes recorded or unrecorded,



All the grandeur and good of ancient nations whose  
fragments we inherit,

All the good of the dozens of ancient nations unknown  
to us by name, date, location,

All that was ever manfully begun, whether it succeeded  
or no,

All suggestions of the divine mind of man or the  
divinity of his mouth, or the shaping of his great  
hands,

All that is well thought or said this day on any part of  
the globe, or on any of the wandering stars, or on  
any of the fix'd stars, by those there as we are  
here,

All that is henceforth to be thought or done by you  
whoever you are, or by any one,

These inure, have inured, shall inure, to the identities  
from which they sprang, or shall spring.

Did you guess any thing lived only its moment ?

The world does not so exist, no parts palpable or  
impalpable so exist,

No consummation exists without being from some long  
previous consummation, and that from some other,

Without the farthest conceivable one coming a bit  
nearer the beginning than any.

Whatever satisfies souls is true ;

Prudence entirely satisfies the craving and glut of  
souls,

Itself only finally satisfies the soul,

The soul has that measureless pride which revolts from  
every lesson but its own.

Now I breathe the word of the prudence that walks  
abreast with time, space, reality,

That answers the pride which refuses every lesson but  
its own.

What is prudence is indivisible,

Declines to separate one part of life from every part,

Divides not the righteous from the unrighteous of the  
living from the dead,

Matches every thought or act by its correlative,  
Knows no possible forgiveness or deputed atonement,  
Knows that the young man who composedly perill'd his  
    life and lost it has done exceedingly well for him-  
    self without doubt,  
That he who never perill'd his life, but retains it to old  
    age in riches and ease, has probably achiev'd  
    nothing for himself worth mentioning,  
Knows that only that person has really learn'd who  
    has learn'd to prefer results,  
Who favours body and soul the same,  
Who perceives the indirect assuredly following the  
    direct,  
Who in his spirit in any emergency whatever neither  
    hurries nor avoids death.

## WARBLE FOR LILAC-TIME

WARBLE me now for joy of lilac-time, (returning in  
    reminiscence,)  
Sort me O tongue and lips for Nature's sake, souvenirs  
    of earliest summer,  
Gather the welcome signs, (as children with pebbles or  
    stringing shells,)  
Put in April and May, the hylas croaking in the ponds,  
    the elastic air,  
Bees, butterflies, the sparrow with its simple notes,  
Blue-bird and darting swallow, nor forget the high-hole  
    flashing his golden wings,  
The tranquil sunny haze, the clinging smoke, the  
    vapour,  
Shimmer of waters with fish in them, the cerulean  
    above,  
All that is jocund and sparkling, the brooks running,  
The maple woods, the crisp February days and the  
    sugar-making,  
The robin where he hops, bright-eyed, brown-breasted,  
With musical clear call at sunrise, and again at sunset,  
Or fitting among the trees of the apple-orchard, build-  
    ing the nest of his mate,

The melted snow of March, the willow sending forth its  
 yellow-green sprouts,  
 For spring-time is here ! the summer is here ! and  
 what is this in it and from it ?  
 Thou, soul, unloosen'd—the restlessness after I know  
 not what ;  
 Come, let us lag here no longer, let us be up and away !  
 O if one could but fly like a bird !  
 O to escape, to sail forth as in a ship !  
 To glide with thee O soul, o'er all, in all, as a ship o'er  
 the waters ;  
 Gathering these hints, the preludes, the blue sky, the  
 grass, the morning drops of dew,  
 The lilac-scent, the bushes with dark green heart-  
 shaped leaves,  
 Wood-violets, the little delicate pale blossoms called  
 innocence,  
 Samples and sorts not for themselves alone, but for  
 their atmosphere,  
 To grace the bush I love—to sing with the birds,  
 A warble for joy of lilac-time, returning in reminiscence.

## VOCALISM

### 1

VOCALISM, measure, concentration, determination, and  
 the divine power to speak words ;  
 Are you full-lung'd and limber-lipp'd from long trial ?  
 from vigorous practice ? from physique ?  
 Do you move in these broad lands as broad as they ?  
 Come duly to the divine power to speak words ?  
 For only at last after many years, after chastity,  
 friendship, procreation, prudence, and nakedness,  
 After treading ground and breasting river and lake,  
 After a loosen'd throat, after absorbing eras, tempera-  
 ments, races, after knowledge, freedom, crimes,  
 After complete faith, after clarifyings, elevations, and  
 removing obstructions,  
 After these and more, it is just possible there comes

to a man, a woman, the divine power to speak words ;  
Then toward that man or that woman swiftly hasten  
all—none refuse, all attend,  
Armies, ships, antiquities, libraries, paintings, machines,  
cities, hate, despair, amity, pain, theft, murder,  
aspiration, form in close ranks,  
They debouch as they are wanted to march obediently  
through the mouth of that man or that woman.

## 2

O what is it in me that makes me tremble so at voices ?  
Surely whoever speaks to me in the right voice, him  
or her I shall follow,  
As the water follows the moon, silently, with fluid  
steps, anywhere around the globe.  
All waits for the right voices ;  
Where is the practis'd and perfect organ ? where is  
the develop'd soul ?  
For I see every word utter'd thence has deeper, sweeter,  
new sounds, impossible on less terms.  
I see brains and lips closed, tympan and temples  
unstruck,  
Until that comes which has the quality to strike and  
to unclose,  
Until that comes which has the quality to bring forth  
what lies slumbering forever ready in all words.

## TO HIM THAT WAS CRUCIFIED

My spirit to yours dear brother,  
Do not mind because many sounding your name do  
not understand you,  
I do not sound your name, but I understand you,  
I specify you with joy O my comrade to salute you,  
and to salute those who are with you, before and  
since, and those to come also,  
That we all labour together transmitting the same  
charge and succession,

We few equals indifferent of lands, indifferent of times,  
We, enclosers of all continents, all castes, allowers of  
all theologies,  
Compassionaters, perceivers, rapport of men,  
We walk silent among disputes and assertions, but reject  
not the disputers nor any thing that is asserted,  
We hear the bawling and din, we are reach'd at by  
divisions, jealousies, recriminations on every side,  
They close peremptorily upon us 'to surround us, my  
comrade,  
Yet we walk unheld, free, the whole earth over,  
journeying up and down till we make our inefface-  
able mark upon time and the diverse eras,  
Till we saturate time and eras, that the men and  
women of races, ages to come, may prove brethren  
and lovers as we are.

## TO A COMMON PROSTITUTE

BE composed—be at ease with me—I am Walt Whit-  
man, liberal and lusty as Nature,  
Not till the sun excludes you do I exclude you,  
Not till the waters refuse to glisten for you and the  
leaves to rustle for you, do my words refuse to  
glisten and rustle for you.  
My girl I appoint with you an appointment, and I  
charge you that you make preparation to be  
worthy to meet me,  
And I charge you that you be patient and perfect till  
I come.  
Till then I salute you with a significant look that you  
do not forget me.

## I WAS LOOKING A LONG WHILE

I WAS looking a long while for Intentions,  
For a clew to the history of the past for myself, and  
for these chants—and now I have found it,  
It is not in those paged fables in the libraries, (them  
I neither accept nor reject,)

It is no more in the legends than in all else,  
 It is in the present—it is this earth to-day,  
 It is in Democracy—(the purport and aim of all the past,)  
 It is the life of one man or one woman to-day—the  
     average man of to-day,  
 It is in languages, social customs, literatures, arts,  
 It is in the broad show of artificial things, ships,  
     machinery, politics, creeds, modern improvements,  
     and the interchange of nations,  
 All for the modern—all for the average man of to-day.

### THOUGHT

OF persons arrived at high positions, ceremonies,  
     wealth, scholarships, and the like ;  
 (To me all that those persons have arrived at sinks  
     away from them, except as it results to their bodies  
     and souls,  
 So that often to me they appear gaunt and naked,  
 And often to me each one mocks the others, and mocks  
     himself or herself,  
 And of each one the core of life, namely happiness, is  
     full of the rotten excrement of maggots,  
 And often to me those men and women pass unwittingly  
     the true realities of life, and go toward false  
     realities,  
 And often to me they are alive after what custom has  
     served them, but nothing more,  
 And often to me they are sad, hasty, unwaked son-  
     nambules walking the dusk.)

### MIRACLES

WHY, who makes much of a miracle ?  
 As to me I know of nothing else but miracles,  
 Whether I walk the streets of Manhattan,  
 Or dart my sight over the roofs of houses toward the  
     sky,  
 Or wade with naked feet along the beach just in the  
     edge of the water,

Or stand under trees in the woods,  
Or talk by day with any one I love, or sleep in the  
    bed at night with any one I love,  
Or sit at table at dinner with the rest,  
Or look at strangers opposite me riding in the car,  
Or watch honey-bees busy around the hive of a summer  
    forenoon,  
Or animals feeding in the fields,  
Or birds, or the wonderfulness of insects in the air,  
Or the wonderfulness of the sundown, or of stars shining  
    so quiet and bright,  
Or the exquisite delicate thin curve of the new moon  
    in spring ;  
These with the rest, one and all, are to me miracles,  
The whole referring, yet each distinct and in its  
    place.

To me every hour of the light and dark is a miracle,  
Every cubic inch of space is a miracle,  
Every square yard of the surface of the earth is spread  
    with the same,  
Every foot of the interior swarms with the same.

To me the sea is a continual miracle,  
The fishes that swim—the rocks—the motion of the  
    waves—the ships with men in them,  
What stranger miracles are there ?

### SPARKLES FROM THE WHEEL

WHERE the city's ceaseless crowd moves on the livelong  
    day,  
Withdrawn I join a group of children watching, I pause  
    aside with them.

By the curb toward the edge of the flagging,  
A knife-grinder works at his wheel sharpening a great  
    knife,  
Bending over he carefully holds it to the stone, by foot  
    and knee,

With measur'd tread he turns rapidly, as he presses  
with light but firm hand,  
Forth issue then in copious golden jets,  
Sparkles from the wheel.

The scene and all its belongings, how they seize and  
affect me,  
The sad sharp-chinn'd old man with worn clothes and  
broad shoulder-band of leather,  
Myself effusing and fluid, a phantom curiously floating,  
now here absorb'd and arrested,  
The group, (an unminded point set in a vast sur-  
rounding,)  
The attentive, quiet children, the loud, proud, restive  
base of the streets,  
The low hoarse purr of the whirling stone, the light-  
press'd blade,  
Diffusing, dropping, sideways-darting, in tiny showers  
of gold,  
Sparkles from the wheel.

### TO A PUPIL

Is reform needed ? is it through you ?  
The greater the reform needed, the greater the Per-  
sonality you need to accomplish it.

You ! do you not see how it would serve to have eyes,  
blood, complexion, clean and sweet ?  
Do you not see how it would serve to have such a body  
and soul that when you enter the crowd an  
atmosphere of desire and command enters with  
you, and every one is impress'd with your Per-  
sonality ?

O the magnet ! the flesh over and over !  
Go, dear friend, if need be give up all else, and com-  
mence to-day to inure yourself to pluck, reality,  
self-esteem, definiteness, elevatedness,  
Rest not till you rivet and publish yourself of your  
own Personality.



## UNFOLDED OUT OF THE FOLDS

UNFOLDED out of the folds of the woman man comes  
 unfolded, and is always to come unfolded,  
 Unfolded only out of the superbest woman of the earth  
 is to come the superbest man of the earth,  
 Unfolded out of the friendliest woman is to come the  
 friendliest man,  
 Unfolded only out of the perfect body of a woman  
 can a man be form'd of perfect body,  
 Unfolded only out of the inimitable poems of woman  
 can come the poems of man, (only thence have  
 my poems come ;)  
 Unfolded out of the strong and arrogant woman I love,  
 only thence can appear the strong and arrogant  
 man I love,  
 Unfolded by brawny embraces from the well-muscled  
 woman I love, only thence come the brawny  
 embraces of the man,  
 Unfolded out of the folds of the woman's brain come  
 all the folds of the man's brain, duly obedient,  
 Unfolded out of the justice of the woman all justice  
 is unfolded,  
 Unfolded out of the sympathy of the woman is all  
 sympathy ;  
 A man is a great thing upon the earth and through  
 eternity, but every jot of the greatness of man is  
 unfolded out of woman ;  
 First the man is shaped in the woman, he can then  
 be shaped in himself.

## WHAT AM I AFTER ALL

WHAT am I after all but a child, pleas'd with the  
 sound of my own name ? repeating it over and  
 over ;  
 I stand apart to hear—it never tires me.  
 To you your name also ;  
 Did you think there was nothing but two or three  
 pronunciations in the sound of your name ?

## WHO LEARNS MY LESSON COMPLETE ?

Who learns my lesson complete ?

Boss, journeyman, apprentice, churchman and atheist,  
The stupid and the wise thinker, parents and offspring,  
merchant, clerk, porter and customer,  
Editor, author, artist, and schoolboy—draw nigh and  
commence ;

It is no lesson—it lets down the bars to a good  
lesson,

And that to another, and every one to another still.

The great laws take and effuse without argument,  
I am of the same style, for I am their friend,  
I love them quits and quits, I do not halt and make  
salaams.

I lie abstracted and hear beautiful tales of things and  
the reasons of things,

They are so beautiful I nudge myself to listen.

I cannot say to any person what I hear—I cannot say  
it to myself—it is very wonderful.

It is no small matter, this round and delicious globe  
moving so exactly in its orbit for ever and ever,  
without one jolt or the untruth of a single  
second,

I do not think it was made in six days, nor in ten  
thousand years, nor ten billions of years,

Nor plann'd and built one thing after another as an  
architect plans and builds a house.

I do not think seventy years is the time of a man or  
woman,

Nor that seventy millions of years is the time of a man  
or woman,

Nor that years will ever stop the existence of me, or  
any one else.

Is it wonderful that I should be immortal ? as every  
one is immortal ;

I know it is wonderful, but my eyesight is equally

## 302 WHO LEARNS MY LESSON COMPLETE

wonderful, and how I was conceived in my mother's  
womb is equally wonderful,  
And pass'd from a babe in the creeping trance of  
a couple of summers and winters to articulate and  
walk—all this is equally wonderful.

And that my soul embraces you this hour, and we  
affect each other without ever seeing each other,  
and never perhaps to see each other, is every bit  
as wonderful.

And that I can think such thoughts as these is just as  
wonderful,  
And that I can remind you, and you think them and  
know them to be true, is just as wonderful.

And that the moon spins round the earth and on with  
the earth, is equally wonderful,  
And that they balance themselves with the sun and  
stars is equally wonderful.

## O STAR OF FRANCE

1870—71

O STAR of France,  
The brightness of thy hope and strength and fame,  
Like some proud ship that led the fleet so long,  
Beseems to-day a wreck driven by the gale, a mastless  
hulk,  
And 'mid its teeming madden'd half-drown'd crowds,  
Nor helm nor helmsman.

Dim smitten star,  
Orb not of France alone, pale symbol of my soul, its  
dearest hopes,  
The struggle and the daring, rage divine for liberty,  
Of aspirations toward the far ideal, enthusiast's dreams  
of brotherhood,  
Of terror to the tyrant and the priest.

Star crucified—by traitors sold,  
Star panting o'er a land of death, heroic land,  
Strange, passionate, mocking, frivolous land.

Miserable ! yet for thy errors, vanities, sins, I will not  
now rebuke thee,  
Thy unexampled woes and pangs have quell'd them all,  
And left thee sacred.

In that amid thy many faults thou ever aimedst highly,  
In that thou wouldst not really sell thyself however  
great the price,  
In that thou surely wakedst weeping from thy drugg'd  
sleep,  
In that alone among thy sisters thou, giantess, didst  
rend the ones that shamed thee,  
In that thou couldst not, wouldst not, wear the usual  
chains,  
This cross, thy livid face, thy pierced hands and feet,  
The spear thrust in thy side.

O star ! O ship of France, beat back and baffled long !  
Bear up O smitten orb ! O ship continue on !

Sure as the ship of all, the Earth itself,  
Product of deathly fire and turbulent chaos,  
Forth from its spasms of fury and its poisons,  
Issuing at last in perfect power and beauty, .  
Onward beneath the sun following its course,  
So thee O ship of France !

Finish'd the days, the clouds dispell'd,  
The travail o'er, the long-sought extrication,  
When lo ! reborn, high o'er the European world,  
(In gladness answering thence, as face afar to face,  
reflecting ours Columbia.)  
Again thy star O France, fair lustrous star,  
In heavenly peace, clearer, more bright than ever,  
Shall beam immortal.

## THE OX-TAMER

IN a far-away northern county in the placid pastoral  
 region,  
 Lives my farmer friend, the theme of my recitative,  
 a famous tamer of oxen,  
 There they bring him the three-year-olds and the four-  
 year-olds to break them,  
 He will take the wildest steer in the world and break  
 him and tame him,  
 He will go fearless without any whip where the young  
 bullock chafes up and down the yard,  
 The bullock's head tosses restless high in the air with  
 raging eyes,  
 Yet see you ! how soon his rage subsides—how soon  
 this tamer tames him ;  
 See you ! on the farms hereabout a hundred oxen  
 young and old, and he is the man who has tamed  
 them,  
 They all know him, all are affectionate to him ;  
 See you ! some are such beautiful animals, so lofty  
 looking ;  
 Some are buff-colour'd, some mottled, one has a white  
 line running along his back, some are brindled,  
 Some have wide flaring horns (a good sign)—see you !  
 the bright hides,  
 See, the two with stars on their foreheads—see, the  
 round bodies and broad backs,  
 How straight and square they stand on their legs—  
 what fine sagacious eyes !  
 How they watch their tamer—they wish him near  
 them—how they turn to look after him !  
 What yearning expression ! how uneasy they are when  
 he moves away from them ;  
 Now I marvel what it can be he appears to them,  
 (books, politics, poems, depart—all else departs,)  
 I confess I envy only his fascination—my silent,  
 illiterate friend,  
 Whom a hundred oxen love there in his life on farms,  
 In the northern county far, in the placid pastoral region.

## WANDERING AT MORN

WANDERING at morn,  
 Emerging from the night from gloomy thoughts, thee  
     in my thoughts,  
 Yearning for thee harmonious Union! thee, singing  
     bird divine!  
 Thee coil'd in evil times my country, with craft and  
     black dismay, with every meanness, treason thrust  
     upon thee,  
 This common marvel I beheld—the parent thrush I  
     watch'd feeding its young,  
 The singing thrush whose tones of joy and faith ecstatic,  
 Fail not to certify and cheer my soul.

There ponder'd, felt I,  
 If worms, snakes, loathsome grubs, may to sweet  
     spiritual songs be turn'd,  
 If vermin so transposed, so used and bless'd may be,  
 Then may I trust in you, your fortunes, days, my  
     country;  
 Who knows but these may be the lessons fit for you?  
 From these, your future song may rise with joyous trills,  
 Destin'd to fill the world.

# PASSAGE TO INDIA

## 1

SINGING my days,  
Singing the great achievements of the present,  
Singing the strong light works of engineers,  
Our modern wonders, (the antique ponderous Seven  
outvied,)  
In the Old World the east the Suez canal,  
The New by its mighty railroad spann'd,  
The seas inlaid with eloquent gentle wires ;  
Yet first to sound, and ever sound, the cry with thee  
O soul,  
The Past ! the Past ! the Past !  
The Past—the dark unfathom'd retrospect !  
The teeming gulf—the sleepers and the shadows !  
The past—the infinite greatness of the past !  
For what is the present after all but a growth out of  
the past ?  
(As a projectile form'd, impell'd, passing a certain line,  
still keeps on,  
So the present, utterly form'd, impell'd by the past.)

## 2

Passage O soul to India !  
Eclaircise the myths Asiatic, the primitive fables.  
Not you alone proud truths of the world,  
Nor you alone ye facts of modern science,  
But myths and fables of eld, Asia's, Africa's fables,  
The far-darting beams of the spirit, the unloos'd dreams,  
The deep diving bibles and legends,  
The daring plots of the poets, the elder religions  
O you temples fairer than lilies pour'd over by the  
rising sun !  
O you fables spurning the known, eluding the hold of  
the known, mounting to heaven !

You lofty and dazzling towers, pinnacled, red as roses,  
burnish'd with gold !

Towers of fables immortal fashion'd from mortal  
dreams !

You too I welcome and fully the same as the rest !

You too with joy I sing.

Passage to India !

Lo, soul, seest thou not God's purpose from the first ?

The earth to be spann'd, connected by network,

The races, neighbours, to marry and be given in  
marriage,

The oceans to be cross'd, the distant brought near,

The lands to be welded together.

A worship new I sing,

You captains, voyagers, explorers, yours,

You engineers, you architects, machinists, yours,

You, not for trade or transportation only,

But in God's name, and for thy sake O soul.

## 3

Passage to India !

Lo soul for thee of tableaux twain,

I see in one the Suez canal initiated, open'd,

I see the procession of steamships, the Empress  
Eugenie's leading the van,

I mark from on deck the strange landscape, the pure  
sky, the level sand in the distance,

I pass swiftly the picturesque groups, the workmen  
gather'd,

The gigantic dredging machines.

In one again, different, (yet thine, all thine, O soul,  
the same,)

I see over my own continent the Pacific railroad sur-  
mounting every barrier,

I see continual trains of cars winding along the Platte  
carrying freight and passengers,

I hear the locomotives rushing and roaring, and the  
shrill steam-whistle,



I hear the echoes reverberate through the grandest  
scenery in the world,  
I cross the Laramie plains, I note the rocks in grotesque  
shapes, the buttes,  
I see the plentiful larkspur and wild onions, the barren,  
colourless, sage-deserts,  
I see in glimpses afar or towering immediately above  
me the great mountains, I see the Wind river and  
the Wahsatch mountains,  
I see the Monument mountain and the Eagle's Nest,  
I pass the Promontory, I ascend the Nevadas,  
I scan the noble Elk mountain and wind around its  
base,  
I see the Humboldt range, I thread the valley and cross  
the river,  
I see the clear waters of lake Tahoe, I see forests of  
majestic pines,  
Or crossing the great desert, the alkaline plains, I  
behold enchanting mirages of waters and meadows,  
Marking through these and after all, in duplicate  
slender lines,  
Bridging the three or four thousand miles of land travel,  
Tying the Eastern to the Western sea,  
The road between Europe and Asia.  
(Ah Genoese thy dream ! thy dream !  
Centuries after thou art laid in thy grave,  
The shore thou foundest verifies thy dream.)

## 4

Passage to India !

Struggles of many a captain, tales of many a sailor  
dead,

Over my mood stealing and spreading they come,  
Like clouds and cloudlets in the unreach'd sky.

Along all history, down the slopes,  
As a rivulet running, sinking now, and now again to  
the surface rising,

A ceaseless thought, a varied train—lo, soul, to thee,  
thy sight, they rise,

The plans, the voyages again, the expeditions ;  
Again Vasco de Gama sails forth,  
Again the knowledge gain'd, the mariner's compass,  
Lands found and nations born, thou born America,  
For purpose vast, man's long probation fill'd,  
Thou rondure of the world at last accomplish'd.

## 5

O vast Rondure, swimming in space,  
Cover'd all over with visible power and beauty,  
Alternate light and day and the teeming spiritual  
darkness,  
Unspeakable high processions of sun and moon and  
countless stars above,  
Below, the manifold grass and waters, animals, moun-  
tains, trees,  
With inscrutable purpose, some hidden prophetic inten-  
tion,  
Now first it seems my thought begins to span thee.

Down from the gardens of Asia descending radiating,  
Adam and Eve appear, then their myriad progeny  
after them,  
Wandering, yearning, curious, with restless explorations,  
With questionings, baffled, formless, feverish, with  
never-happy hearts,  
With that sad incessant refrain, *Wherefore unsatisfied  
soul ? and Whither O mocking life ?*

Ah who shall soothe these feverish children ?  
Who justify these restless explorations ?  
Who speak the secret of impassive earth ?  
Who bind it to us ? what is this separate Nature so  
unnatural ?  
What is this earth to our affections ? (unloving earth,  
without a throb to answer ours,  
Cold earth, the place of graves.)

Yet soul be sure the first intent remains, and shall be  
carried out,  
Perhaps even now the time has arrived.

After the seas are all cross'd, (as they seem already  
cross'd,)  
After the great captains and engineers have accom-  
plish'd their work,  
After the noble inventors, after the scientists, the  
chemist, the geologist, ethnologist,  
Finally shall come the poet worthy that name,  
The true son of God shall come singing his songs.

Then not your deeds only O voyagers, O scientists and  
inventors, shall be justified,  
All these hearts as of fretted children shall be sooth'd,  
All affection shall be fully responded to, the secret shall  
be told,  
All these separations and gaps shall be taken up and  
hook'd and link'd together,  
The whole earth, this cold, impassive, voiceless earth,  
shall be completely justified,  
Trinitas divine shall be gloriously accomplish'd and  
compacted by the true son of God, the poet,  
(He shall indeed pass the straits and conquer the  
mountains,  
He shall double the cape of Good Hope to some  
purpose,)  
Nature and Man shall be disjoin'd and diffused no more,  
The true son of God shall absolutely fuse them.

## 6

Year at whose wide-flung door I sing !  
Year of the purpose accomplish'd !  
Year of the marriage of continents, climates and  
oceans !  
(No mere doge of Venice now wedding the Adriatic,)  
I see O year in you the vast terraqueous globe given  
and giving all,  
Europe to Asia, Africa join'd, and they to the New  
World,  
The lands, geographies, dancing before you, holding  
a festival garland,  
As brides and bridegrooms hand in hand.

Passage to India !

Cooling airs from Caucasus far, soothing cradle of  
man,

The river Euphrates flowing, the past lit up again.

Lo soul, the retrospect brought forward,

The old, most populous, wealthiest of earth's lands,

The streams of the Indus and the Ganges and their  
many affluents,

(I my shores of America walking to-day behold, resum-  
ing all,)

The tale of Alexander on his warlike marches suddenly  
dying,

On one side China and on the other side Persia and  
Arabia,

To the south the great seas and the bay of Bengal,

The flowing literatures, tremendous epics, religions,  
castes,

Old occult Brahma interminably far back, the tender  
and junior Buddha,

Central and southern empires and all their belongings,  
possessors,

The wars of Tamerlane, the reign of Aurungzebe,

The traders, rulers, explorers, Moslems, Venetians,  
Byzantium, the Arabs, Portuguese,

The first travellers famous yet, Marco Polo, Batouta  
the Moor,

Doubts to be solv'd, the map incognita, blanks to be  
fill'd,

The foot of man unstay'd, the hands never at rest,

Thyself O soul that will not brook a challenge.

The mediaeval navigators rise before me,

The world of 1492, with its awaken'd enterprise,

Something swelling in humanity now like the sap of  
the earth in spring,

The sunset splendour of chivalry declining.

And who art thou sad shade ?

Gigantic, visionary, thyself a visionary,

With majestic limbs and pious beaming eyes,

Spreading around with every look of thine a golden  
 world,  
 Enhuing it with gorgeous hues.

As the chief histrion,  
 Down to the footlights walks in some great scena,  
 Dominating the rest I see the Admiral himself,  
 (History's type of courage, action, faith,) .  
 Behold him sail from Palos leading his little fleet,  
 His voyage behold, his return, his great fame,  
 His misfortunes, calumniators, behold him a prisoner,  
 chain'd,  
 Behold his dejection, poverty, death.

(Curious in time I stand, noting the efforts of heroes,  
 Is the deferment long? bitter the slander, poverty,  
 death?  
 Lies the seed unreck'd for centuries in the ground?  
 lo, to God's due occasion,  
 Uprising in the night, it sprouts, blooms,  
 And fills the earth with use and beauty.)

## 7

Passage indeed O soul to primal thought,  
 Not lands and seas alone, thy own clear freshness,  
 The young maturity of brood and bloom,  
 To realms of budding bibles.

O soul, repressless, I with thee and thou with me,  
 Thy circumnavigation of the world begin,  
 Of man, the voyage of his mind's return,  
 To reason's early paradise,  
 Back, back to wisdom's birth, to innocent intuitions,  
 Again with fair creation.

## 8

O we can wait no longer,  
 We too take ship O soul,  
 Joyous we too launch out on trackless seas,  
 Fearless for unknown shores on waves of ecstasy to sail,

Amid the wafting winds, (thou pressing me to thee,  
I thee to me, O soul,)

Caroling free, singing our song of God,  
Chanting our chant of pleasant exploration.

With laugh and many a kiss,  
(Let others deprecate, let others weep for sin, remorse,  
humiliation,)

O soul thou pleasest me, I thee.

Ah more than any priest O soul we too believe in God,  
But with the mystery of God we dare not dally.

O soul thou pleasest me, I thee,  
Sailing these seas or on the hills, or waking in the night,  
Thoughts, silent thoughts, of Time and Space and  
Death, like waters flowing,

Bear me indeed as through the regions infinite,  
Whose air I breathe,\*whose ripples hear, lave me all  
over,

Bathe me O God in thee, mounting to thee,  
I and my soul to range in range of thee.

O Thou transcendent,  
Nameless, the fibre and the breath,  
Light of the light, shedding forth universes, thou centre  
of them,

Thou mightier centre of the true, the good, the  
loving,

Thou moral, spiritual fountain—affection's source—  
thou reservoir,

(O pensive soul of me—O thirst unsatisfied—waitest  
not there ?

Waitest not haply for us somewhere there the Comrade  
perfect ?)

Thou pulse—thou motive of the stars, suns, systems,  
That, circling, move in order, safe, harmonious,  
Athwart the shapeless vastnesses of space,  
How should I think, how breathe a single breath, how  
speak, if, out of myself,

I could not launch, to those, superior universes ?

Swiftly I shrivel at the thought of God,  
 At Nature and its wonders, Time and Space and  
 Death,  
 But that I, turning, call to thee O soul, thou actual  
 Me,  
 And lo, thou gently masterest the orbs,  
 Thou matest Time, smilest content at Death,  
 And fillest, swellest full the vastnesses of Space.

Greater than stars or suns,  
 Bounding O soul thou journeyest forth ;  
 What love than thine and ours could wider amplify ?  
 What aspirations, wishes, outvie thine and ours O soul ?  
 What dreams of the ideal ? what plans of purity,  
 perfection, strength ?  
 What cheerful willingness for others' sake to give up  
 all ?

For others' sake to suffer all ?

Reckoning ahead O soul, when thou, the time achiev'd,  
 The seas all cross'd, weather'd the capes, the voyage  
 done,

Surrounded, copest, frontest God, yieldest, the aim  
 attain'd,

As fill'd with friendship, love complete, the Elder  
 Brother found,

The Younger melts in fondness in his arms.

## 9

Passage to more than India !

Are thy wings plumed indeed for such far flights ?

O soul, voyagest thou indeed on voyages like those ?

Disportest thou on waters such as those ?

Soundest below the Sanscrit and the Vedas ?

Then have thy bent unleash'd.

Passage to you, your shores, ye aged fierce enigmas !

Passage to you, to mastership of you, ye strangling  
 problems !

You, strew'd with the wrecks of skeletons, that, living,  
 never reach'd you.

Passage to more than India !

O secret of the earth and sky !

Of you O waters of the sea ! O winding creeks and  
rivers !

Of you O woods and fields ! of you strong mountains  
of my land !

Of you O prairies ! of you grey rocks !

O morning red ! O clouds ! O rain and snows !

O day and night, passage to you !

O sun and moon and all you stars ! Sirius and Jupiter !  
Passage to you !

Passage, immediate passage ! the blood burns in my  
veins !

Away O soul ! hoist instantly the anchor !

Cut the hawsers—haul out—shake out every sail !

Have we not stood here like trees in the ground long  
enough ?

Have we not grovell'd here long enough, eating and  
drinking like mere brutes ?

Have we not darken'd and dazed ourselves with books  
long enough ?

Sail forth—steer for the deep waters only,

Reckless O soul, exploring, I with thee, and thou with  
me,

For we are bound where mariner has not yet dared to go,  
And we will risk the ship, ourselves and all.

O my brave soul !

O farther farther sail !

O daring joy, but safe ! are they not all the seas of  
God ?

O farther, farther, farther sail !



## PRAYER OF COLUMBUS

A BATTER'D, wreck'd old man,  
Thrown on this savage shore, far, far from home,  
Pent by the sea and dark rebellious brows, twelve  
dreary months,  
Sore, stiff with many toils, sicken'd and nigh to death,  
I take my way along the island's edge,  
Venting a heavy heart.

I am too full of woe !  
Haply I may not live another day ;  
I cannot rest O God, I cannot eat or drink or sleep,  
Till I put forth myself, my prayer, once more to Thee,  
Breathe, bathe myself once more in Thee, commune  
with Thee,  
Report myself once more to Thee.

Thou knowest my years entire, my life,  
My long and crowded life of active work, not adoration  
merely ;  
Thou knowest the prayers and vigils of my youth,  
Thou knowest my manhood's solemn and visionary  
meditations,  
Thou knowest how before I commenced I devoted all  
to come to Thee,  
Thou knowest I have in age ratified all those vows and  
strictly kept them,  
Thou knowest I have not once lost nor faith nor ecstasy  
in Thee,

In shackles, prison'd, in disgrace, repining not,  
Accepting all from Thee, as duly come from Thee.

All my emprises have been fill'd with Thee,  
My speculations, plans, begun and carried on in  
thoughts of Thee,  
Sailing the deep or journeying the land for Thee ;  
Intentions, purports, aspirations mine, leaving results  
to Thee.

O I am sure they really came from Thee,  
The urge, the ardour, the unconquerable will,  
The potent, felt, interior command, stronger than  
words,  
A message from the Heavens whispering to me even  
in sleep,  
These sped me on.

By me and these the work so far accomplish'd,  
By me earth's elder cloy'd and stifled lands uncloy'd,  
unloos'd,  
By me the hemispheres rounded and tied, the unknown  
to the known.

The end I know not, it is all in Thee,  
Or small or great I know not—haply what broad fields,  
what lands,  
Haply the brutish measureless human undergrowth I  
know,  
Transplanted there may rise to stature, knowledge  
worthy Thee,  
Haply the swords I know may there indeed be turn'd  
to reaping-tools,  
Haply the lifeless cross I know, Europe's dead cross,  
may bud and blossom there.

One effort more, my altar this bleak sand;  
That Thou O God my life hast lighted,  
With ray of light, steady, ineffable, vouchsafed of Thee,  
Light rare untellable, lighting the very light,  
Beyond all signs, descriptions, languages;  
For that O God, be it my latest word, here on my knees,  
Old, poor, and paralysed, I thank Thee.

My terminus near,  
The clouds already closing in upon me,  
The voyage balk'd, the course disputed, lost,  
I yield my ships to Thee.

My hands, my limbs grow nerveless,  
My brain feels rack'd, bewilder'd,  
Let the old timbers part, I will not part,

I will cling fast to Thee, O God, though the waves  
    buffet me,  
Thee, Thee at least I know.

Is it the prophet's thought I speak, or am I raving ?  
What do I know of life ? what of myself ?  
I know not even my own work past or present,  
Dim ever-shifting guesses of it spread before me,  
Of newer better worlds, their mighty parturition,  
Mocking, perplexing me.

And these things I see suddenly, what mean they ?  
As if some miracle, some hand divine unseal'd my eyes,  
Shadowy vast shapes smile through the air and sky,  
And on the distant waves sail countless ships,  
And anthems in new tongues I hear saluting me.

# THE SLEEPERS

## 1

I WANDER all night in my vision,  
Stepping with light feet, swiftly and noiselessly stepping  
and stopping,

Bending with open eyes over the shut eyes of sleepers,  
Wandering and confused, lost to myself, ill-assorted,  
contradictory,

Pausing, gazing, bending, and stopping.

How solemn they look there, stretch'd and still,  
How quiet they breathe, the little children in their  
cradles.

The wretched features of ennuyés, the white features  
of corpses, the livid faces of drunkards, the sick-  
grey faces of onanists,

The gash'd bodies on battle-fields, the insane in their  
strong-door'd rooms, the sacred idiots, the new-  
born emerging from gates, and the dying emerging  
from gates,

The night pervades them and infolds them.

The married couple sleep calmly in their bed,  
The sisters sleep lovingly side by side in their bed,  
The men sleep lovingly side by side in theirs,  
And the mother sleeps with her little child carefully  
wrapt.

The blind sleep, and the deaf and dumb sleep,  
The prisoner sleeps well in the prison, the runaway  
son sleeps,

The murderer that is to be hung next day, how does  
he sleep ?

And the murder'd person, how does he sleep ?

The female that loves unrequited sleeps,  
And the male that loves unrequited sleeps,

The head of the money-maker that plotted all day  
sleeps,  
And the enraged and treacherous dispositions, all, all  
sleep.

I stand in the dark with drooping eyes by the worst-  
suffering and the most restless,  
I pass my hands soothingly to and fro a few inches  
from them,  
The restless sink in their beds, they fitfully sleep.

Now I pierce the darkness, new beings appear,  
The earth recedes from me into the night,  
I saw that it was beautiful, and I see that what is not  
the earth is beautiful.

I go from bedside to bedside, I sleep close with the  
other sleepers each in turn,  
I dream in my dream all the dreams of the other  
dreamers,  
And I become the other dreamers.

I am a dance—play up there ! the fit is whirling me  
fast !

I am the ever-laughing—it is new moon and twilight,  
I see the hiding of douceurs, I see nimble ghosts which-  
ever way I look,  
Cache and cache again deep in the ground and sea,  
and where it is neither ground nor sea.

Well do they do their jobs those journeymen divine,  
Only from me can they hide nothing, and would not  
if they could,  
I reckon I am their boss and they make me a pet  
besides,  
And surround me and lead me and run ahead when  
I walk,  
To lift their cunning covers to signify me with stretch'd  
arms, and resume the way ;  
Onward we move, a gay gang of blackguards ! with  
mirth-shouting music and wild-flapping pennants  
of joy !

I am the actor, the actress, the voter, the politician,  
The emigrant and the exile, the criminal that stood in  
the box,

He who has been famous and he who shall be famous  
after to-day,

The stammerer, the well-form'd person, the wasted or  
feeble person.

I am she who adorn'd herself and folded her hair  
expectantly,

My truant lover has come, and it is dark.

Double yourself and receive me darkness,

Receive me and my lover too, he will not let me go  
without him.

My hands are spread forth, I pass them in all directions,  
I would sound up the shadowy shore to which you are  
journeying.

Be careful darkness ! already what was it touch'd me ?  
I thought my lover had gone, else darkness and he are  
one,

I hear the heart-beat, I follow, I fade away.

## 2

I descend my western course, my sinews are flaccid,  
Perfume and youth course through me and I am their  
wake.

It is my face yellow and wrinkled instead of the old  
woman's,

I sit low in a straw-bottom chair and carefully darn  
my grandson's stockings.

It is I too, the sleepless widow looking out on the  
winter midnight,

I see the sparkles of starshine on the icy and pallid  
earth.

A shroud I see and I am the shroud, I wrap a body  
and lie in the coffin,

It is dark here under ground, it is not evil or pain  
here, it is blank here, for reasons.

(It seems to me that every thing in the light and air  
ought to be happy,  
Whoever is not in his coffin and the dark grave let him  
know he has enough.)

## 3

I see a beautiful gigantic swimmer swimming naked  
through the eddies of the sea,  
His brown hair lies close and even to his head, he  
strikes out with courageous arms, he urges himself  
with his legs,  
I see his white body, I see his undaunted eyes,  
I hate the swift-running eddies that would dash him  
head-foremost on the rocks.

What are you doing you ruffianly red-trickled waves?  
Will you kill the courageous giant? will you kill him  
in the prime of his middle age?

Steady and long he struggles,  
He is baffled, bang'd, bruis'd, he holds out while his  
strength holds out,  
The slapping eddies are spotted with his blood, they  
bear him away, they roll him, swing him, turn him,  
His beautiful body is borne in the circling eddies, it is  
continually bruis'd on rocks,  
Swiftly and out of sight is borne the brave corpse.

## 4

I turn but do not extricate myself,  
Confused, a past-reading, another, but with darkness  
yet.

The beach is cut by the razory ice-wind, the wreck-guns  
sound.  
The tempest lulls, the moon comes floundering through  
the drifts.

I look where the ship helplessly heads end on, I hear  
the burst as she strikes, I hear the howls of dismay,  
they grow fainter and fainter.

I cannot aid with my wringing fingers,  
I can but rush to the surf and let it drench me and  
freeze upon me.

I search with the crowd, not one of the company is  
wash'd to us alive,  
In the morning I help pick up the dead and lay them  
in rows in a barn.

## 5

Now of the older war-days, the defeat at Brooklyn,  
Washington stands inside the lines, he stands on the  
intrench'd hills amid a crowd of officers.  
His face is cold and damp, he cannot repress the weeping  
drops,  
He lifts the glass perpetually to his eyes, the colour is  
blanch'd from his cheeks,  
He sees the slaughter of the southern braves confided  
to him by their parents.

The same at last and at last when peace is declared,  
He stands in the room of the old tavern, the well-  
belov'd soldiers all pass through,  
The officers speechless and slow draw near in their  
turns,  
The chief encircles their necks with his arm and kisses  
them on the cheek,  
He kisses lightly the wet cheeks one after another, he  
shakes hands and bids good-bye to the army.

## 6

Now what my mother told me one day as we sat at  
dinner together,  
Of when she was a nearly grown girl living home with  
her parents on the old homestead.  
A red squaw came one breakfast-time to the old home-  
stead,  
On her back she carried a bundle of rushes for rush-  
bottoming chairs,



Her hair, straight, shiny, coarse, black, profuse, half-envelop'd her face,

Her step was free and elastic, and her voice sounded exquisitely as she spoke.

My mother look'd in delight and amazement at the stranger,

She look'd at the freshness of her tall-borne face and full and pliant limbs,

The more she look'd upon her she loved her,

Never before had she seen such wonderful beauty and purity,

She made her sit on a bench by the jamb of the fireplace, she cook'd food for her,

She had no work to give her, but she gave her remembrance and fondness.

The red squaw stayed all the forenoon, and toward the middle of the afternoon she went away,

O my mother was loath to have her go away,

All the week she thought of her, she watch'd for her many a month,

She remember'd her many a winter and many a summer,

But the red squaw never came nor was heard of there again.

## 7

A show of the summer softness—a contact of something unseen—an amour of the light and air,

I am jealous and overwhelm'd with friendliness,

And will go gallivant with the light and air myself.

O love and summer, you are in the dreams and in me,

Autumn and winter are in the dreams, the farmer goes with his thrift,

The droves and crops increase, the barns are well-fill'd.

Elements merge in the night, ships make tacks in the dreams,

The sailor sails, the exile returns home,

The fugitive returns unharm'd, the immigrant is back beyond months and years,

The poor Irishman lives in the simple house of his childhood with the well-known neighbours and faces,  
They warmly welcome him, he is barefoot again, he forgets he is well off,  
The Dutchman voyages home, and the Scotchman and Welshman voyage home, and the native of the Mediterranean voyages home,  
To every port of England, France, Spain, enter well-fill'd ships,  
The Swiss foots it toward his hills, the Prussian goes his way, the Hungarian his way, and the Pole his way,  
The Swede returns, and the Dane and Norwegian return.

The homeward bound and the outward bound,  
The beautiful lost swimmer, the ennuyé, the onanist, the female that loves unrequited, the money-maker,  
The actor and actress, those through with their parts and those waiting to commence,  
The affectionate boy, the husband and wife, the voter, the nominee that is chosen and the nominee that has fail'd,  
The great already known and the great any time after to-day,  
The stammerer, the sick, the perfect-form'd, the homely,  
The criminal that stood in the box, the judge that sat and sentenced him, the fluent lawyers, the jury, the audience,  
The laughter and weeper, the dancer, the midnight widow, the red squaw,  
The consumptive, the erysipalite, the idiot, he that is wrong'd,  
The antipodes, and every one between this and them in the dark,  
I swear they are averaged now—one is no better than the other,  
The night and sleep have liken'd them and restored them.

I swear they are all beautiful,  
Every one that sleeps is beautiful, every thing in the  
dim light is beautiful,  
The wildest and bloodiest is over, and all is peace.

Peace is always beautiful,  
The myth of heaven indicates peace and night.

The myth of heaven indicates the soul, .  
The soul is always beautiful, it appears more or it  
appears less, it comes or it lags behind,  
It comes from its embower'd garden and looks pleasantly  
on itself and encloses the world,  
Perfect and clean the genitals previously jetting, and  
perfect and clean the womb cohering,  
The head well-grown proportion'd and plumb, and the  
bowels and joints proportion'd and plumb.

The soul is always beautiful,  
The universe is duly in order, everything is in its place,  
What has arrived is in its place and what waits shall be  
in its place,  
The twisted skull waits, the watery or rotten blood  
waits,  
The child of the glutton or venerealee waits long, and  
the child of the drunkard waits long, and the  
drunkard himself waits long,  
The sleepers that lived and died wait, the far advanced  
are to go on in their turns, and the far behind are  
to come on in their turns,  
The diverse shall be no less diverse, but they shall flow  
and unite—they unite now.

## 8

The sleepers are very beautiful as they lie unclothed,  
They flow hand in hand over the whole earth from east  
to west as they lie unclothed,  
The Asiatic and African are hand in hand, the European  
and American are hand in hand,  
Learn'd and unlearn'd are hand in hand, and male and  
female are hand in hand,  
The bare arm of the girl crosses the bare breast of her

lover, they press close without lust, his lips press  
her neck,  
The father holds his grown or ungrown son in his arms  
with measureless love, and the son holds the father  
in his arms with measureless love,  
The white hair of the mother shines on the white wrist  
of the daughter,  
The breath of the boy goes with the breath of the man,  
friend is inarm'd by friend, .  
The scholar kisses the teacher and the teacher kisses the  
scholar, the wrong'd is made right,  
The call of the slave is one with the master's call, and  
the master salutes the slave,  
The felon steps forth from the prison, the insane be-  
comes sane, the suffering of sick persons is reliev'd,  
The sweatings and fevers stop, the throat that was  
unsound is sound, the lungs of the consumptive  
are resumed, the poor distress'd head is free,  
The joints of the rheumatic move as smoothly as ever,  
and smoother than ever,  
Stiflings and passages open, the paralysed becomes supple,  
The swell'd and convuls'd and congested awake to  
themselves in condition,  
They pass the invigoration of the night and the  
chemistry of the night, and awake.

I too pass from the night,  
I stay a while away O night, but I return to you again  
and love you.

Why should I be afraid to trust myself to you ?  
I am not afraid, I have been well brought forward by  
you,  
I love the rich running day, but I do not desert her in  
whom I lay so long,  
I know not how I came of you and I know not where  
I go with you, but I know I came well and shall go  
well.

I will stop only a time with the night, and rise betimes,  
I will duly pass the day O my mother, and duly return  
to you.

# TO THINK OF TIME

## 1

To think of time—of all that retrospection,  
To think of to-day, and the ages continued hencefor-  
ward.

Have you guess'd you yourself would not continue ?  
Have you dreaded these earth-beetles ?  
Have you fear'd the future would be nothing to you ?

Is to-day nothing ? is the beginningless past nothing ?  
If the future is nothing they are just as surely nothing.

To think that the sun rose in the east—that men and  
women were flexible, real, alive—that every thing  
was alive,

To think that you and I did not see, feel, think, nor  
bear our part,

To think that we are now here and bear our part.

## 2

Not a day passes, not a minute or second without an  
accouchement,

Not a day passes, not a minute or second without a  
corpse.

The dull nights go over and the dull days also,  
The soreness of lying so much in bed goes over,  
The physician after long putting off gives the silent and  
terrible look for an answer,

The children come hurried and weeping, and the brother  
and sisters are sent for,

Medicines stand unused on the shelf, (the camphor-  
smell has long pervaded the rooms,)

The faithful hand of the living does not desert the hand  
of the dying,

The twitching lips press lightly on the forehead of the  
dying.

The breath ceases and the pulse of the heart ceases,  
The corpse stretches on the bed and the living look  
upon it,

It is palpable as the living are palpable.

The living look upon the corpse with their eyesight,  
But without eyesight lingers a different living and looks  
curiously on the corpse.

## 3

To think the thought of death merged in the thought of  
materials,

To think of all these wonders of city and country, and  
others taking great interest in them, and we taking  
no interest in them.

To think how eager we are in building our houses,  
To think others shall be just as eager, and we quite  
indifferent.

(I see one building the house that serves him a few years,  
or seventy or eighty years at most,

I see one building the house that serves him longer  
than that.)

Slow-moving and black lines creep over the whole earth  
—they never cease—they are the burial lines,  
He that was President was buried, and he that is now  
President shall surely be buried.

## 4

A reminiscence of the vulgar fate,  
A frequent sample of the life and death of workmen,  
Each after his kind.

Cold dash of waves at the ferry-wharf, posh and ice in  
the river, half-frozen mud in the streets,

A grey discouraged sky overhead, the short last day-  
light of December,

A hearse and stages, the funeral of an old Broadway  
stage-driver, the cortège mostly drivers.

Steady the trot to the cemetery, duly rattles the death-bell,

The gate is pass'd, the new-dug grave is halted at, the living alight, the hearse uncloses,

The coffin is pass'd out, lower'd and settled, the whip is laid on the coffin, the earth is swiftly shovell'd in,

The mound above is flatted with the spades—silence,

A minute—no one moves or speaks—it is done,

He is decently put away—is there any thing more ?

He was a good fellow, free-mouth'd, quick-temper'd, not bad-looking,

Ready with life or death for a friend, fond of women, gambled, ate hearty, drank hearty,

Had known what it was to be flush, grew low-spirited toward the last, sicken'd, was help'd by a contribution,

Died, aged forty-one years—and that was his funeral.

Thumb extended, finger uplifted, apron, cape, gloves, strap, wet-weather clothes, whip carefully chosen,

Boss, spotter, starter, hostler, somebody loafing on you, you loafing on somebody, headway, man before and man behind,

Good day's work, bad day's work, pet stock, mean stock, first out, last out, turning-in at night,

To think that these are so much and so nigh to other drivers, and he there takes no interest in them.

## 5

The markets, the government, the working-man's wages, to think what account they are through our nights and days,

To think that other working-men will make just as great account of them, yet we make little or no account.

The vulgar and the refined, what you call sin and what you call goodness, to think how wide a difference, To think the difference will still continue to others, yet we lie beyond the difference.

To think how much pleasure there is,  
Do you enjoy yourself in the city ? or engaged in business ? or planning a nomination and election ? or with your wife and family ?  
Or with your mother and sisters ? or in womanly housework ? or the beautiful maternal cares ?  
These also flow onward to others, you and I flow onward,  
But in due time you and I shall take less interest in them.

Your farm, profits, crops—to think how engross'd you are,  
To think there will still be farms, profits, crops, yet for you of what avail ?

## 6

What will be will be well, for what is is well,  
To take interest is well, and not to take interest shall be well.

The domestic joys, the daily housework or business, the building of houses, are not phantasms, they have weight, form, location,  
Farms, profits, crops, markets, wages, government, are none of them phantasms,  
The difference between sin and goodness is no delusion,  
The earth is not an echo, man and his life and all the things of his life are well-consider'd.

You are not thrown to the winds, you gather certainly and safely around yourself,  
Yourself ! yourself ! yourself, for ever and ever !

## 7

It is not to diffuse you that you were born of your mother and father, it is to identify you,  
It is not that you should be undecided, but that you should be decided,



Something long preparing and formless is arrived and  
form'd in you,

You are henceforth secure, whatever comes or goes.

The threads that were spun are gather'd, the weft  
crosses the warp, the pattern is systematic.

The preparations have every one been justified,  
The orchestra have sufficiently tuned their instruments,  
the baton has given the signal.

The guest that was coming, he waited long, he is now  
housed,

He is one of those who are beautiful and happy, he is  
one of those that to look upon and be with is  
enough.

The law of the past cannot be eluded,  
The law of the present and future cannot be eluded,  
The law of the living cannot be eluded, it is eternal,  
The law of promotion and transformation cannot be  
eluded,

The law of heroes and good-doers cannot be eluded,  
The law of drunkards, informers, mean persons, not one  
iota thereof can be eluded.

## 8

Slow moving and black lines go ceaselessly over the  
earth,

Northerner goes carried and Southerner goes carried,  
and they on the Atlantic side and they on the  
Pacific,

And they between, and all through the Mississippi  
country, and all over the earth.

The great masters and kosmos are well as they go,  
the heroes and good-doers are well,

The known leaders and inventors and the rich owners  
and pious and distinguish'd may be well,

But there is more account than that, there is strict  
account of all.

The interminable hordes of the ignorant and wicked  
are not nothing.

The barbarians of Africa and Asia are not nothing,

The perpetual successions of shallow people are not  
nothing as they go.

Of and in all these things,

I have dream'd that we are not to be changed so much,  
nor the law of us changed,

I have dream'd that heroes and good-doers shall be  
under the present and past law,

And that murderers, drunkards, liars, shall be under  
the present and past law,

For I have dream'd that the law they are under now is  
enough.

And I have dream'd that the purpose and essence of the  
known life, the transient,

Is to form and decide identity for the unknown life, the  
permanent.

If all came but to ashes of dung,

If maggots and rats ended us, then Alarum ! for we are  
betray'd,

Then indeed suspicion of death.

Do you suspect death ? if I were to suspect death  
I should die now,

Do you think I could walk pleasantly and well-suited  
toward annihilation ?

Pleasantly and well-suited I walk,

Whither I walk I cannot define, but I know it is good,

The whole universe indicates that it is good,

The past and the present indicate that it is good.

How beautiful and perfect are the animals !

How perfect the earth, and the minutest thing upon  
it !

What is called good is perfect, and what is called bad  
is just as perfect, •

The vegetables and minerals are all perfect, and the  
imponderable fluids perfect ;  
Slowly and surely they have pass'd on to this, and slowly  
and surely they yet pass on.

## 9

I swear I think now that every thing without exception  
has an eternal soul !

The trees have, rooted in the ground ! the weeds of the  
sea have ! the animals !

I swear I think there is nothing but immortality !  
That the exquisite scheme is for it, and the nebulous  
float is for it, and the cohering is for it !  
And all preparation is for it—and identity is for it—and  
life and materials are altogether for it !

# WHISPERS OF HEAVENLY DEATH

## DAREST THOU NOW O SOUL

DAREST thou now O soul,  
Walk out with me toward the unknown region,  
Where neither ground is for the feet nor any path to  
follow ?

No map there, nor guide,  
Nor voice sounding, nor touch of human hand,  
Nor face with blooming flesh, nor lips, nor eyes, are in  
that land.

I know it not O soul,  
Nor dost thou, all is a blank before us,  
All waits undream'd of in that region, that inaccessible  
land.

Till when the ties loosen,  
All but the ties eternal, Time and Space,  
Nor darkness, gravitation, sense, nor any bounds  
bounding us.

Then we burst forth, we float,  
In Time and Space O soul, prepared for them,  
Equal, equipt at last, (O joy ! O fruit of all !) them  
to fulfil O soul.

## WHISPERS OF HEAVENLY DEATH

WHISPERS of heavenly death murmur'd I hear,  
Labial gossip of night, sibilant chorals,  
Footsteps gently ascending, mystical breezes wafted  
soft and low,  
Ripples of unseen rivers, tides of a current flowing,  
forever flowing,  
(Or is it the plashing of tears ? the measureless waters  
of human tears ?)

### 336 WHISPERS OF HEAVENLY DEATH

I see, just see skyward, great cloud-masses,  
Mournfully slowly they roll, silently swelling and  
mixing,

With at times a half-dimm'd sadden'd far-off star,  
Appearing and disappearing.

(Some parturition rather, some solemn immortal birth ;  
On the frontiers to eyes impenetrable,  
Some soul is passing over.)

#### CHANTING THE SQUARE DEIFIC

##### 1

CHANTING the square deific, out of the One advancing,  
out of the sides,

Out of the old and new, out of the square entirely  
divine,

Solid, four-sided, (all the sides needed,) from this side  
Jehovah am I,

Old Brahm I, and I Saturnius am ;

Not Time affects me—I am Time, old, modern as any,  
Unpersuadable, relentless, executing righteous judge-  
ments,

As the Earth, the Father, the brown old Kronos, with  
laws,

Aged beyond computation, yet ever new, ever with  
those mighty laws rolling,

Relentless I forgive no man—whoever sins dies—I will  
have that man's life ;

Therefore let none expect mercy—have the seasons,  
gravitation, the appointed days, mercy ? no more  
have I,

But as the seasons and gravitation, and as all the  
appointed days that forgive not,

I dispense from this side judgements inexorable without  
the least remorse.

##### 2

Consolator most mild, the promis'd one advancing,  
With gentle hand extended, the mightier God am I,

Foretold by prophets and poets in their most rapt  
 prophecies and poems,  
 From this side, lo ! the Lord Christ gazes—lo ! Hermes  
 I—lo ! mine is Hercules' face,  
 All sorrow, labour, suffering, I, tallying it, absorb in  
 myself,  
 Many times have I been rejected, taunted, put in prison,  
 and crucified, and many times shall be again,  
 All the world have I given up for my dear brothers' and  
 sisters' sake, for the soul's sake,  
 Wending my way through the homes of men, rich or  
 poor, with the kiss of affection,  
 For I am affection, I am the cheer-bringing God, with  
 hope and all-enclosing charity,  
 With indulgent words as to children, with fresh and  
 sane words, mine only,  
 Young and strong I pass knowing well I am destin'd  
 myself to an early death ;  
 But my charity has no death—my wisdom dies not,  
 neither early nor late,  
 And my sweet love bequeath'd here and elsewhere  
 never dies.

3

Aloof, dissatisfied, plotting revolt,  
 Comrade of criminals, brother of slaves,  
 Crafty, despised, a drudge, ignorant,  
 With sudra face and worn brow, black, but in the  
 depths of my heart, proud as any,  
 Lifted now and always against whoever scorning  
 assumes to rule me,  
 Morose, full of guile, full of reminiscences, brooding,  
 with many wiles,  
 (Though it was thought I was baffled and dispell'd, and  
 my wiles done, but that will never be,)  
 Defiant, I, Satan, still live, still utter words, in new  
 lands duly appearing, (and old ones also,)  
 Permanent here from my side, warlike, equal with  
 any, real as any,  
 Nor time nor change shall ever change me or my words.

## 4

Santa Spirita, breather, life,  
 Beyond the light, lighter than light,  
 Beyond the flames of hell, joyous, leaping easily above  
     hell,  
 Beyond Paradise, perfumed solely with mine own per-  
     fume,  
 Including all life on earth, touching, including God,  
     including Saviour and Satan,  
 Ethereal, pervading all, (for without me what were all ?  
     what were God ?)  
 Essence of forms, life of the real identities, permanent,  
     positive, (namely the unseen,)  
 Life of the great round world, the sun and stars, and of  
     man, I, the general soul,  
 Here the square finishing, the solid, I the most solid,  
 Breathe my breath also through these songs.

## OF HIM I LOVE DAY AND NIGHT

Of him I love day and night I dream'd I heard he was  
     dead,  
 And I dream'd I went where they had buried him I love,  
     but he was not in that place,  
 And I dream'd I wander'd searching among burial-  
     places to find him,  
 And I found that every place was a burial-place ;  
 The houses full of life were equally full of death, (this  
     house is now,)  
 The streets, the shipping, the places of amusement, the  
     Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia, the Mannahatta,  
     were as full of the dead as of the living,  
 And fuller, O vastly fuller of the dead than of the living;  
 And what I dream'd I will henceforth tell to every  
     person and age,  
 And I stand henceforth bound to what I dream'd,  
 And now I am willing to disregard burial-places and  
     dispense with them,  
 And if the memorials of the dead were put up indif-

ferently everywhere, even in the room where I eat  
or sleep, I should be satisfied,  
And if the corpse of any one I love, or if my own corpse,  
be duly render'd to powder and pour'd in the sea,  
I shall be satisfied,  
Or if it be distributed to the winds I shall be satisfied.

### AS IF A PHANTOM CARESS'D ME

As if a phantom caress'd me,  
I thought I was not alone walking here by the shore ;  
But the one I thought was with me as now I walk by  
the shore, the one I loved that caress'd me,  
As I lean and look through the glimmering light, that  
one has utterly disappear'd,  
And those appear that are hateful to me and mock me.

### ASSURANCES

I NEED no assurances, I am a man who is pre-occupied  
of his own soul ;  
I do not doubt that from under the feet and beside the  
hands and face I am cognizant of, are now looking  
faces I am not cognizant of, calm and actual faces,  
I do not doubt but the majesty and beauty of the world  
are latent in any iota of the world,  
I do not doubt I am limitless, and that the universes  
are limitless, in vain I try to think how limitless,  
I do not doubt that the orbs and the systems of orbs  
play their swift sports through the air on purpose,  
and that I shall one day be eligible to do as much  
as they, and more than they,  
I do not doubt that temporary affairs keep on and on  
millions of years,  
I do not doubt interiors have their interiors, and  
exteriors have their exteriors, and that the eye-  
sight has another eyesight, and the hearing another  
hearing, and the voice another voice,



- I do not doubt that the passionately-wept deaths of young men are provided for, and that the deaths of young women and the deaths of little children are provided for,  
(Did you think Life was so well provided for, and Death, the purport of all Life, is not well provided for ?)  
I do not doubt that wrecks at sea, no matter what the horrors of them, no matter whose wife, child, husband, father, lover, has gone down, are provided for, to the minutest points,  
I do not doubt that whatever can possibly happen anywhere at any time, is provided for in the inferences of things,  
I do not think Life provides for all and for Time and Space, but I believe Heavenly Death provides for all.

### THAT MUSIC ALWAYS ROUND ME

- THAT music always round me, unceasing, unbeginning,  
yet long untaught I did not hear,  
But now the chorus I hear and am elated,  
A tenor, strong, ascending with power and health, with glad notes of daybreak I hear,  
A soprano at intervals sailing buoyantly over the tops of immense waves,  
A transparent base shuddering lusciously under and through the universe,  
The triumphant tutti, the funeral wailings with sweet flutes and violins, all these I fill myself with,  
I hear not the volumes of sound merely, I am moved by the exquisite meanings,  
I listen to the different voices winding in and out, striving, contending with fiery vehemence to excel each other in emotion ;  
I do not think the performers know themselves—but now I think I begin to know them.

## A NOISELESS PATIENT SPIDER

A NOISELESS patient spider,  
 I mark'd where on a little promontory it stood isolated,  
 Mark'd how to explore the vacant vast surrounding,  
 It launch'd forth filament, filament, filament, out of  
     itself,  
 Ever unreeling them, ever tirelessly speeding them.

And you O my soul where you stand,  
 Surrounded, detached, in measureless oceans of space,  
 Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing, seeking the  
     spheres to connect them,  
 Till the bridge you will need be form'd, till the ductile  
     anchor hold,  
 Till the gossamer thread you fling catch somewhere,  
     O my soul.

## TO ONE SHORTLY TO DIE

FROM all the rest I single out you, having a message  
     for you,  
 You are to die—let others tell you what they please,  
     I cannot prevaricate,  
 I am exact and merciless, but I love you—there is no  
     escape for you.

Softly I lay my right hand upon you, you just feel it,  
 I do not argue, I bend my head close and half envelop  
     it,

I sit quietly by, I remain faithful,  
 I am more than nurse, more than parent or neigh-  
     bour,

I absolve you from all except yourself spiritual bodily,  
     that is eternal, you yourself will surely escape,  
 The corpse you will leave will be but excrementitious.

The sun bursts through in unlooked-for directions,  
 Strong thoughts fill you and confidence, you smile,  
 You forget you are sick, as I forget you are sick;

You do not see the medicines, you do not mind the  
weeping friends, I am with you,  
I exclude others from you, there is nothing to be  
commiserated,  
I do not commiserate, I congratulate you.

## NIGHT ON THE PRAIRIES

NIGHT on the prairies,  
The supper is over, the fire on the ground burns  
The wearied emigrants sleep, wrapt in their blankets ;  
I walk by myself—I stand and look at the stars, which  
I think now I never realized before.

Now I absorb immortality and peace,  
I admire death and test propositions.

How plenteous ! how spiritual ! how resumé !  
The same old man and soul—the same old aspirations,  
and the same content.

I was thinking the day most splendid till I saw what the  
not-day exhibited,  
I was thinking this globe enough till there sprang out  
so noiseless around me myriads of other globes.

Now while the great thoughts of space and eternity fill  
me I will measure myself by them,  
And now touch'd with the lives of other globes arrived  
as far along as those of the earth,  
Or waiting to arrive, or pass'd on farther than those of  
the earth,  
I henceforth no more ignore them than I ignore my  
own life,  
Or the lives of the earth arrived as far as mine, or  
waiting to arrive.

O I see now that life cannot exhibit all to me, as the day  
cannot,  
I see that I am to wait for what will be exhibited by  
death.

## THOUGHT

As I sit with others at a great feast, suddenly while the  
 music is playing,  
 To my mind, (whence it comes I know not,) spectral in  
 mist of a wreck at sea,  
 Of certain ships, how they sail from port with flying  
 streamers and wafted kisses, and that is the last  
 of them,  
 Of the solemn and murky mystery about the fate of the  
 President,  
 Of the flower of the marine science of fifty generations  
 founder'd off the North east coast and going down  
 —of the steamship Arctic going down,  
 Of the veil'd tableau—women gather'd together on  
 deck, pale, heroic, waiting the moment that draws  
 so close—O the moment !  
 A huge sob—a few bubbles—the white foam spirting  
 up—and then the women gone,  
 Sinking there while the passionless wet flows on—and  
 I now pondering, Are those women indeed gone ?  
 Are souls drown'd and destroy'd so ?  
 Is only matter triumphant ?

## THE LAST INVOCATION

At the last, tenderly,  
 From the walls of the powerful fortress'd house,  
 From the clasp of the knitted locks, from the keep of  
 the well-closed doors, \*  
 Let me be wafted.  
 Let me glide noiselessly forth ;  
 With the key of softness unlock the locks—with a  
 whisper,  
 Set ope the doors O soul.  
 Tenderly—be not impatient,  
 (Strong is your hold O mortal flesh,  
 Strong is your hold O love.)

# AS I WATCH'D THE PLOUGHMAN PLOUGHING

As I watch'd the ploughman ploughing,  
Or the sower sowing in the fields, or the harvester  
harvesting,  
I saw there too, O life and death, your analogies ;  
(Life, life is the tillage, and Death is the harvest  
according.)

## PENSIVE AND FALTERING

PENSIVE and faltering,  
The words *the Dead* I write,  
For living are the Dead,  
(Haply the only living, only real,  
And I the apparition, I the spectre.)

## A PAUMANOK PICTURE

Two boats with nets lying off the sea-beach, quite still,  
Ten fishermen waiting—they discover a thick school of  
mossbonkers—they drop the join'd seine-ends in  
the water,

The boats separate and row off, each on its rounding  
course to the beach, enclosing the mossbonkers,

The net is drawn in by a windlass by those who stop  
ashore,

Some of the fishermen lounge in their boats, others  
stand ankle-deep in the water, pois'd on strong legs,

The boats partly drawn up, the water slapping against  
them,

Strew'd on the sand in heaps and windrows, well out  
from the water, the green-back'd spotted moss-  
bonkers.

# FROM NOON TO STARRY NIGHT

## THOU ORB ALOFT FULL-DAZZLING

THOU orb aloft full-dazzling ! thou hot October noon !  
Flooding with sheeny light the grey beach sand,  
The sibilant near sea with vistas far and foam,  
And tawny streaks and shades and spreading blue ;  
O sun of noon refulgent ! my special word to thee.

Hear me illustrious !  
Thy lover me, for always I have loved thee,  
Even as basking babe, then happy boy alone by some  
wood edge, thy touching-distant beams enough,  
Or man matured, or young or old, as now to thee I  
launch my invocation.

(Thou canst not with thy dumbness me deceive,  
I know before the fitting man all Nature yields,  
Though answering not in words, the skies, trees, hear  
his voice—and thou O sun,  
As for thy throes, thy perturbations, sudden breaks  
and shafts of flame gigantic,  
I understand them, I know those flames, those per-  
turbations well.)

Thou that with fructifying heat and light,  
O'er myriad farms, o'er lands and waters North and  
South,  
O'er Mississippi's endless course, o'er Texas' grassy  
plains, Kanada's woods,  
O'er all the globe that turns its face to thee shining in  
space,  
Thou that impartially infoldest all, not only continents,  
seas,  
Thou that to grapes and weeds and little wild flowers  
givest so liberally,

Shed, shed thyself on mine and me, with but a fleeting  
ray out of thy million millions,  
Strike through these chants.

Nor only launch thy subtle dazzle and thy strength for  
these,  
Prepare the later afternoon of me myself—prepare my  
lengthening shadows,  
Prepare my starry nights.

## FACES

### I

SAUNTERING the pavement or riding the country by-  
road, lo, such faces !  
Faces of friendship, precision, caution, suavity, ideality,  
The spiritual-prescient face, the always welcome com-  
mon benevolent face,  
The face of the singing of music, the grand faces of  
natural lawyers and judges broad at the back-top,  
The faces of hunters and fishers bulged at the brows,  
the shaved blanch'd faces of orthodox citizens,  
The pure, extravagant, yearning, questioning artist's  
face,  
The ugly face of some beautiful soul, the handsome  
detested or despised face,  
The sacred faces of infants, the illuminated face of the  
mother of many children,  
The face of an amour, the face of veneration,  
The face as of a dream, the face of an immobile rock,  
The face withdrawn of its good and bad, a castrated  
face,  
A wild hawk, his wings clipp'd by the clipper,  
A stallion that yielded at last to the thongs and knife  
of the gelder.

Sauntering the pavement thus, or crossing the ceaseless  
ferry, faces and faces and faces,  
I see them and complain not, and am content with all.



## 2

Do you suppose I could be content with all if I thought  
them their own finale ?

This now is too lamentable a face for a man,  
Some abject louse asking leave to be, cringing for it,  
Some milk-nosed maggot blessing what lets it wrig to  
its hole.

This face is a dog's snout sniffing for garbage,  
Snakes nest in that mouth, I hear the sibilant threat.

This face is a haze more chill than the arctic sea,  
Its sleepy and wobbling icebergs crunch as they go.

This is a face of bitter herbs, this an emetic, they need  
no label,  
And more of the drug-shelf, laudanum, caoutchouc, or  
hog's-lard.

This face is an epilepsy, its wordless tongue gives out  
the unearthly cry,  
Its veins down the neck distend, its eyes roll till they  
show nothing but their whites,  
Its teeth grit, the palms of the hands are cut by the  
turn'd-in nails,  
The man falls struggling and foaming to the ground,  
while he speculates well.

This face is bitten by vermin and worms,  
And this is some murderer's knife with a half-pull'd  
scabbard.

This face owes to the sexton his dismalest fee,  
An unceasing death-bell tolls there.

## 3

Features of my equals would you trick me with your  
creas'd and cadaverous march ?  
Well, you cannot trick me.

I see your rounded never-erased flow,  
I see 'neath the rims of your haggard and mean dis-  
guises.

Splay and twist as you like, poke with the tangling fores  
 of fishes or rats,  
 You'll be unmuzzled, you certainly will.  
 I saw the face of the most smear'd and slobbering idiot  
 they had at the asylum,  
 And I knew for my consolation what they knew not,  
 I knew of the agents that emptied and broke my  
 brother,  
 The same wait to clear the rubbish from the fallen  
 tenement,  
 And I shall look again in a score or two of ages,  
 And I shall meet the real landlord perfect and unharm'd,  
 every inch as good as myself.

4

The Lord advances, and yet advances,  
 Always the shadow in front, always the reach'd hand  
 bringing up the laggards.  
 Out of this face emerge banners and horses—O superb !  
 I see what is coming,  
 I see the high pioneer-caps, see staves of runners clear-  
 ing the way,  
 I hear victorious drums.  
 This face is a life-boat,  
 This is the face commanding and bearded, it asks no  
 odds of the rest,  
 This face is flavour'd fruit ready for eating,  
 This face of a healthy honest boy is the programme of  
 all good.  
 These faces bear testimony slumbering or awake,  
 They show their descent from the Master himself.  
 Off the word I have spoken I except not one—red,  
 white, black, are all deific,  
 In each house is the ovum, it comes forth after a thou-  
 sand years.  
 Spots or cracks at the windows do not disturb me,  
 Tall and sufficient stand behind and make signs to me,  
 I read the promise and patiently wait.

## 5

The old face of the mother of many children,  
Whist ! I am fully content.

Lull'd and late is the smoke of the First-day morning,  
It hangs low over the rows of trees by the fences,  
It hangs thin by the sassafras and wild cherry and cat-  
brier under them.

I saw the rich ladies in full dress at the soiree,  
I heard what the singers were singing so long,  
Heard who sprang in crimson youth from the white  
froth and the water-blue.

Behold a woman !  
She looks out from her quaker cap, her face is clearer  
and more beautiful than the sky.

She sits in an arm-chair under the shaded porch of the  
farm-house,  
The sun just shines on her old white head.

Her ample gown is of cream-hued linen,  
Her grandsons raised the flax, and her grand-daughters  
spun it with the distaff and the wheel.

The melodious character of the earth,  
The finish beyond which philosophy cannot go and does  
not wish to go,  
The justified mother of men.

## THE MYSTIC TRUMPETER

## 1

HARK, some wild trumpeter, some strange musician,  
Hovering unseen in air, vibrates capricious tunes  
to-night.

I hear thee trumpeter, listening alert I catch thy notes,  
Now pouring, whirling like a tempest round me,  
Now low, subdued, now in the distance lost.

## 2

Come nearer bodiless one, haply in thee resounds  
Some dead composer, haply thy pensive life  
Was fill'd with aspirations high, uniform'd ideals,  
Waves, oceans musical, chaotically surging,  
That now ecstatic ghost, close to me bending, thy  
cornet echoing, pealing,  
Gives out to no one's ears but mine, but freely gives to  
mine,  
That I may thee translate.

## 3

Blow trumpeter free and clear, I follow thee,  
While at thy liquid prelude, glad, serene,  
The fretting world, the streets, the noisy hours of day  
withdraw,  
A holy calm descends like dew upon me,  
I walk in cool refreshing night the walks of Paradise,  
I scent the grass, the moist air and the roses ;  
Thy song expands my numb'd imbonded spirit, thou  
freest, launchest me,  
Floating and basking upon heaven's lake.

## 4

Blow again trumpeter ! and for my sensuous eyes,  
Bring the old pageants, show the feudal world.  
What charm thy music works ! thou makest pass before  
me,  
Ladies and cavaliers long dead, barons are in their  
castle halls, the troubadours are singing,  
Arm'd knights go forth to redress wrongs, some in quest  
of the holy Graal ;  
I see the tournament, I see the contestants incased in  
heavy armour seated on stately champing horses,  
I hear the shouts, the sounds of blows and smiting  
steel ;  
I see the Crusaders' tumultuous armies—hark, how the  
cymbals clang,  
Lo, where the monks walk in advance, bearing the cross  
on high.

## 5

Blow again trumpeter ! and for thy theme,  
Take now the enclosing theme of all, the solvent and  
the setting,  
Love, that is pulse of all, the sustenance and the pang,  
The heart of man and woman all for love,  
No other theme but love—knitting, enclosing, all-  
diffusing love.

O how the immortal phantoms crowd around me !  
I see the vast alembic ever working, I see and know the  
flames that heat the world,  
The glow, the blush, the beating hearts of lovers,  
So blissful happy some, and some so silent, dark, and  
nigh to death ;  
Love, that is all the earth to lovers—love, that mocks  
time and space,  
Love, that is day and night—love, that is sun and moon  
and stars,  
Love, that is crimson, sumptuous, sick with per-  
fume,  
No other words but words of love, no other thought but  
love.

## 6

Blow again trumpeter—conjure war's alarums.  
Swift to thy spell a shuddering hum like distant  
thunder rolls,  
Lo, where the arm'd men hasten—lo, mid the clouds  
of dust the glint of bayonets,  
I see the grime-faced cannoneers, I mark the rosy flash  
amid the smoke, I hear the cracking of the  
guns ;  
Nor war alone—thy fearful music-song, wild player,  
brings every sight of fear,  
'The deeds of ruthless brigands, rapine, murder—I hear  
the cries for help !  
I see ships foundering at sea, I behold on deck and below  
deck the terrible tableaux.

## 7

O trumpeter, methinks I am myself the instrument  
 thou playest,  
 Thou melt'st my heart, my brain—thou movest, draw-  
 est, changest them at will ;  
 And now thy sullen notes send darkness through me,  
 Thou takest away all cheering light, all hope,  
 I see the enslaved, the overthrown, the hurt, the  
 oppress of the whole earth,  
 I feel the measureless shame and humiliation of my  
 race, it becomes all mine,  
 Mine too the revenges of humanity, the wrongs of ages,  
 baffled feuds and hatreds,  
 Utter defeat upon me weighs—all lost—the foe vic-  
 torious,  
 (Yet 'mid the ruins Pride colossal stands unshaken to  
 the last,  
 Endurance, resolution to the last.)

## 8

Now trumpeter for thy close,  
 Vouchsafe a higher strain than any yet,  
 Sing to my soul, renew its languishing faith and hope,  
 Rouse up my slow belief, give me some vision of the  
 future,  
 Give me for once its prophecy and joy.

O glad, exulting, culminating song !  
 A vigour more than earth's is in thy notes,  
 Marches of victory—man disenthral'd—the conqueror  
 at last,  
 Hymns to the universal God from universal man—all  
 joy !

A reborn race appears—a perfect world, all joy !  
 Women and men in wisdom innocence and health—  
 all joy !  
 Riotous laughing bacchanals fill'd with joy !  
 War, sorrow, suffering gone—the rank earth purged—  
 nothing but joy left !

The ocean fill'd with joy—the atmosphere all joy!  
Joy ! joy ! in freedom, worship, love ! joy in the  
ecstasy of life !  
Enough to merely be ! enough to breathe !  
Joy ! joy ! all over joy !

### TO A LOCOMOTIVE IN WINTER

THEE for my recitative,  
Thee in the driving storm even as now, the snow, the  
winter-day declining,  
Thee in thy panoply, thy measur'd dual throbbing and  
thy beat convulsive,  
Thy black cylindric body, golden brass and silvery steel,  
Thy ponderous side-bars, parallel and connecting rods,  
gyrating, shuttling at thy sides,  
Thy metrical, now swelling pant and roar, now tapering  
in the distance,  
Thy great protruding head-light fix'd in front,  
Thy long, pale, floating vapour-pennants, tinged with  
delicate purple,  
The dense and murky clouds out-belching from thy  
smoke-stack,  
Thy knitted frame, thy springs and valves, the tremu-  
lous twinkle of thy wheels,  
The train of cars behind, obedient, merrily following,  
Through gale or calm, now swift, now slack, yet steadily  
careering ;  
Type of the modern—emblem of motion and power—  
pulse of the continent,  
For once come serve the Muse and merge in verse, even  
as here I see thee,  
With storm and buffeting gusts of wind and falling  
snow,  
By day thy warning ringing bell to sound its notes,  
By night thy silent signal lamps to swing.  
Fierce-throated beauty !  
Roll through my chant with all thy lawless music, thy  
swinging lamps at night,

Thy madly-whistled laughter, echoing, rumbling like an  
 earthquake, rousing all,  
 Law of thyself complete, thine own track firmly hold-  
 ing,  
 (No sweetness debonair of tearful harp or glib piano  
 thine,)  
 Thy trills of shrieks by rocks and hills return'd,  
 Launch'd o'er the prairies wide, across the lakes,  
 To the free skies unpent and glad and strong.

### EXCELSIOR

Who has gone farthest ? for I would go farther,  
 And who has been just ? for I would be the most just  
 person of the earth,  
 And who most cautious ? for I would be more  
 cautious,  
 And who has been happiest ? O I think it is I—I think  
 no one was ever happier than I,  
 And who has lavish'd all ? for I lavish constantly the  
 best I have,  
 And who proudest ? for I think I have reason to be  
 the proudest son alive—for I am the son of the  
 brawny and tall-topt city,  
 And who has been bold and true ? for I would be the  
 boldest and truest being of the universe,  
 And who benevolent ? for I would show more benevo-  
 lence than all the rest,  
 And who has receiv'd the love of the most friends ?  
 for I know what it is to receive the passionâte love  
 of many friends,  
 And who possesses a perfect and enamour'd body ?  
 for I do not believe any one possesses a more  
 perfect or enamour'd body than mine,  
 And who thinks the amplest thoughts ? for I would  
 surround those thoughts,  
 And who has made hymns fit for the earth ? for I am  
 mad with devouring ecstasy to make joyous hymns  
 for the whole earth.



## BY BROAD POTOMAC'S SHORE

By broad Potomac's shore, again old tongue,  
(Still uttering, still ejaculating, canst never cease this  
babble ?)

Again old heart so gay, again to you, your sense, the  
full flush spring returning,

Again the freshness and the odours, again Virginia's  
summer sky, pellucid blue and silver,

Again the forenoon purple of the hills,

Again the deathless grass, so noiseless soft and green,

Again the blood-red roses blooming.

Perfume this book of mine O blood-red roses !

Lave subtly with your waters every line Potomac !

Give me of you O spring, before I close, to put between  
its pages !

O forenoon purple of the hills, before I close, of you !

O deathless grass, of you !

## OLD WAR-DREAMS

In midnight sleep of many a face of anguish,  
Of the look at first of the mortally wounded, (of that  
indescribable look,)

Of the dead on their backs with arms extended wide,  
I dream, I dream, I dream.

Of scenes of Nature, fields and mountains,  
Of skies so beauteous after a storm, and at night the  
moon so unearthly bright,

Shining sweetly, shining down, where we dig the  
trenches and gather the heaps,  
I dream, I dream, I dream.

Long have they pass'd, faces and trenches and fields,  
Where through the carnage I moved with a callous  
composure, or away from the fallen,

Onward I sped at the time—but now of their forms at  
night,  
I dream, I dream, I dream.

## A CLEAR MIDNIGHT

THIS is thy hour O Soul, thy free flight into the word-  
less,  
Away from books, away from art, the day erased, the  
lesson done,  
Thee fully forth emerging, silent, gazing, pondering the  
themes thou lovest best,  
Night, sleep, death and the stars.

# SONGS OF PARTING

## AS THE TIME DRAWS NIGH

As the time draws nigh glooming a cloud,  
A dread beyond of I know not what darkens me.

I shall go forth,  
I shall traverse the States awhile, but I cannot tell  
whither or how long,  
Perhaps soon some day or night while I am singing my  
voice will suddenly cease.

O book, O chants ! must all then amount to but this ?  
Must we barely arrive at this beginning of us ?—and  
yet it is enough, O soul ;  
O soul, we have positively appear'd—that is enough.

## YEARS OF THE MODERN

YEARS of the modern ! years of the unperform'd !  
Your horizon rises, I see it parting away for more  
august dramas,  
I see not America only, not only Liberty's nation but  
other nations preparing,  
I see tremendous entrances and exits, new combina-  
tions, the solidarity of races,  
I see that force advancing with irresistible power on  
the world's stage,  
(Have the old forces, the old wars, played their parts?  
are the acts suitable to them closed ?)  
I see Freedom, completely arm'd and victorious and  
very haughty, with Law on one side and Peace on  
the other,  
A stupendous trio all issuing forth against the idea of  
caste ;  
What historic dénouements are these we so rapidly  
approach ?

I see men marching and countermarching by swift  
millions,  
I see the frontiers and boundaries of the old aristocracies  
broken,  
I see the landmarks of European kings removed,  
I see this day the People beginning their landmarks,  
(all others give way ;)  
Never were such sharp questions ask'd as this day,  
Never was average man, his soul, more energetic, more  
like a God,  
Lo, how he urges and urges, leaving the masses no rest !  
His daring foot is on land and sea everywhere, he  
colonizes the Pacific, the archipelagoes,  
With the steamship, the electric telegraph, the news-  
paper, the wholesale engines of war,  
With these and the world-spreading factories he inter-  
links all geography, all lands ;  
What whispers are these O lands, running ahead of  
you, passing under the seas ?  
Are all nations communing ? is there going to be but  
one heart to the globe ?  
Is humanity forming en-masse ? for lo, tyrants tremble,  
crowns grow dim,  
The earth, restive, confronts a new era, perhaps a  
general divine war,  
No one knows what will happen next, such portents fill  
the days and nights ;  
Years prophetic ! the space ahead as I walk, as  
I vainly try to pierce it, is full of phantoms,  
Unborn deeds, things soon to be, project their shapes  
around me,  
This incredible rush and heat, this strange ecstatic fever  
of dreams O years !  
Your dreams O years, how they penetrate through me !  
(I know not whether I sleep or wake ;)  
The perform'd America and Europe grow dim, retiring  
in shadow behind me,  
The unperform'd, more gigantic than ever, advance,  
advance upon me.

## ASHES OF SOLDIERS

ASHES of soldiers South or North,  
 As I muse retrospective murmuring a chant in thought,  
 The war resumes, again to my sense your shapes,  
 And again the advance of the armies.

Noiseless as mists and vapours,  
 From their graves in the trenches ascending,  
 From cemeteries all through Virginia and Tennessee,  
 From every point of the compass out of the countless  
     graves,

In wafted clouds, in myriads large, or squads of twos  
     or threes or single ones they come,  
 And silently gather round me.

Now sound no note O trumpeters,  
 Not at the head of my cavalry parading on spirited  
     horses,

With sabres drawn and glistening, and carbines by  
     their thighs, (ah my brave horsemen !

My handsome tan-faced horsemen ! what life, what joy  
     and pride,

With all the perils were yours.)

Nor you drummers, neither at reveillé at dawn,  
 Nor the long roll alarming the camp, nor even the  
     muffled beat for a burial,

Nothing from you this time O drummers bearing my  
     warlike drums.

But aside from these and the marts of wealth and the  
     crowded promenade,

Admitting around me comrades close unseen by the  
     rest and voiceless,

The slain elate and alive again, the dust and débris  
     alive,

I chant this chant of my silent soul in the name of all  
     dead soldiers.

Faces so pale with wondrous eyes, very dear, gather  
     closer yet,

Draw close, but speak not.

Phantoms of countless lost,  
Invisible to the rest henceforth become my companions,  
Follow me ever—desert me not while I live.

Sweet are the blooming cheeks of the living—sweet  
are the musical voices sounding,  
But sweet, ah sweet, are the dead with their silent eyes.

Dearest comrades, all is over and long gone,  
But love is not over—and what love, O comrades !  
Perfume from battle-fields rising, up from the fætor  
arising.

Perfume therefore my chant, O love, immortal love,  
Give me to bathe the memories of all dead soldiers,  
Shroud them, embalm them, cover them all over with  
tender pride.

Perfume all—make all wholesome,  
Make these ashes to nourish and blossom,  
O love, solve all, fructify all with the last chemistry.

Give me exhaustless, make me a fountain,  
That I exhale love from me wherever I go like a moist  
perennial dew,  
For the ashes of all dead soldiers South or North.

### AS AT THY PORTALS ALSO DEATH

As at thy portals also death,  
Entering thy sovereign, dim, illimitable grounds,  
To memories of my mother, to the divine blending,  
maternity,  
To her, buried and gone, yet buried not, gone not  
from me,  
(I see again the calm benignant face fresh and beautiful  
still,  
I sit by the form in the coffin,  
I kiss and kiss convulsively again the sweet old lips,  
the cheeks, the closed eyes in the coffin ;)

## 362 AS AT THY PORTALS ALSO DEATH

To her, the ideal woman, practical, spiritual, of all of  
earth, life, love, to me the best,  
I grave a monumental line, before I go, amid these  
songs,  
And set a tombstone here.

### MY LEGACY

THE business man the acquirer vast,  
After assiduous years surveying results, preparing for  
departure,  
Devises houses and lands to his children, bequeaths  
stocks, goods, funds for a school or hospital,  
Leaves money to certain companions to buy tokens,  
souvenirs of gems and gold.

But I, my life surveying, closing,  
With nothing to show to devise from its idle years,  
Nor houses nor lands, nor tokens of gems or gold for  
my friends,  
Yet certain remembrances of the war for you, and after  
you,  
And little souvenirs of camps and soldiers, with my  
love,  
I bind together and bequeath in this bundle of songs.

### PENSIVE ON HER DEAD GAZING

PENSIVE on her dead gazing, I heard the Mother of All,  
Desperate on the torn bodies, on the forms covering  
the battle-fields gazing,  
(As the last gun ceased, but the scent of the powder-  
smoke linger'd,)  
As she call'd to her earth with mournful voice while  
she stalk'd,  
Absorb them well O my earth, she cried, I charge you  
lose not my sons, lose not an atom,  
And you streams absorb them well, taking their dear  
blood,

And you local spots, and you airs that swim above  
 lightly impalpable,  
 And all you essences of soil and growth, and you my  
 rivers' depths,  
 And you mountain sides, and the woods where my dear  
 children's blood trickling redden'd,  
 And you trees down in your roots to bequeath to all  
 future trees,  
 My dead absorb or South or North—my young men's  
 bodies absorb, and their precious precious blood,  
 Which holding in trust for me faithfully back again  
 give me many a year hence,  
 In unseen essence and odour of surface and grass,  
 centuries hence,  
 In blowing airs from the fields back again give me my  
 darlings, give my immortal heroes,  
 Exhale me them centuries hence, breathe me their  
 breath, let not an atom be lost,  
 O years and graves ! O air and soil ! O my dead, an  
 aroma sweet !  
 Exhale them perennial sweet death, years, centuries  
 hence.

### CAMPS OF GREEN

Not alone those camps of white, old comrades of the  
 wars,  
 When as order'd forward, after a long march,  
 Footsore and weary, soon as the light lessens we halt  
 for the night,  
 Some of us so fatigued carrying the gun and knapsack,  
 dropping asleep in our tracks,  
 Others pitching the little tents, and the fires lit up  
 begin to sparkle,  
 Outposts of pickets posted surrounding alert through  
 the dark,  
 And a word provided for countersign, careful for  
 safety,  
 Till to the call of the drummers at daybreak loudly  
 beating the drums,



We rise up refresh'd, the night and sleep pass'd over,  
and resume our journey,  
Or proceed to battle.

Lo, the camps of the tents of green,  
Which the days of peace keep filling, and the days of  
war keep filling,  
With a mystic army, (is it too order'd forward ? is it  
too only halting awhile,  
Till night and sleep pass over ?)

Now in those camps of green, in their tents dotting the  
world,  
In the parents, children, husbands, wives, in them, in  
the old and young,  
Sleeping under the sunlight, sleeping under the moon-  
light, content and silent there at last,  
Behold the mighty bivouac-field and waiting-camp of  
all,  
Of the corps and generals all, and the President over  
the corps and generals all,  
And of each of us O soldiers, and of each and all in the  
ranks we fought,  
(There without hatred we all, all meet.)

For presently O soldiers, we too camp in our place in  
the bivouac-camps of green,  
But we need not provide for outposts, nor word for the  
counter-sign,  
Nor drummer to beat the morning drum.

### JOY, SHIPMATE, JOY !

Joy, shipmate, joy !  
(Pleas'd to my soul at death I cry,)  
Our life is closed, our life begins,  
The long, long anchorage we leave,  
The ship is clear at last, she leaps !  
She swiftly courses from the shore,  
Joy, shipmate, joy.

## SO LONG !

To conclude, I announce what comes after me.

I remember I said before my leaves sprang at all,  
I would raise my voice jocund and strong with reference  
to consummations.

When America does what was promis'd,  
When through these States walk a hundred millions of  
superb persons,  
When the rest part away for superb persons and con-  
tribute to them,  
When breeds of the most perfect mothers denote  
America,  
Then to me and mine our due fruition.

I have press'd through in my own right,  
I have sung the body and the soul, war and peace have  
I sung, and the songs of life and death,  
And the songs of birth, and shown that there are many  
births.

I have offer'd my style to every one, I have journey'd  
with confident step ;  
While my pleasure is yet at the full I whisper *So  
long !*  
And take the young woman's hand and the young  
man's hand for the last time.

I announce natural persons to arise,  
I announce justice triumphant,  
I announce uncompromising liberty and equality,  
I announce the justification of candour and the justifica-  
tion of pride.

I announce that the identity of these States is a single  
identity only,  
I announce the Union more and more compact, indis-  
soluble,  
I announce splendours and majesties to make all the  
previous politics of the earth insignificant.

I announce adhesiveness, I say it shall be limitless,  
unloosen'd,

I say you shall yet find the friend you were looking for.

I announce a man or woman coming, perhaps you are  
the one, (*So long !*)

I announce the great individual, fluid as Nature, chaste,  
affectionate, compassionate, fully arm'd.

I announce a life that shall be copious, vehement,  
spiritual, bold,

I announce an end that shall lightly and joyfully meet  
its translation.

I announce myriads of youths, beautiful, gigantic,  
sweet-blooded,

I announce a race of splendid and savage old men.

O thicker and faster—(*So long !*)

O crowding too close upon me,

I foresee too much, it means more than I thought,

It appears to me I am dying.

Hasten throat and sound your last,

Salute me—salute the days once more. Peal the old  
cry once more.

Screaming electric, the atmosphere using,

At random glancing, each as I notice absorbing,

Swiftly on, but a little while alighting,

Curious envelop'd messages delivering,

Sparkles hot, seed ethereal down in the dirt dropping,

Myself unknowing, my commission obeying, to question  
it never daring,

To ages and ages yet the growth of the seed leaving,

To troops out of the war arising, they the tasks I have  
set promulging,

To women certain whispers of myself bequeathing,  
their affection me more clearly explaining,

To young men my problems offering—no dallier I—

I the muscle of their brains trying,

So I pass, a little time vocal, visible, contrary,

Afterward a melodious echo, passionately bent for,  
(death making me really undying,)

The best of me then when no longer visible, for toward  
that I have been incessantly preparing.

What is there more, that I lag and pause and crouch  
extended with unshut mouth ?

Is there a single final farewell ?

My songs cease, I abandon them,  
From behind the screen where I hid I advance per-  
sonally solely to you.

Camerado, this is no book,  
Who touches this touches a man,  
(Is it night ? are we here together alone ?)  
It is I you hold and who holds you,  
I spring from the pages into your arms—decease calls  
me forth.

O how your fingers drowse me,  
Your breath falls around me like dew, your pulse lulls  
the tympan of my ears,  
I feel immersed from head to foot,  
Delicious, enough.

Enough O deed impromptu and secret,  
Enough O gliding present—enough O summ'd-up past.

Dear friend whoever you are take this kiss,  
I give it especially to you, do not forget me,  
I feel like one who has done work for the day to retire  
awhile,

I receive now again of my many translations, from my  
avataras ascending, while others doubtless await  
me,

An unknown sphere more real than I dream'd, more  
direct, darts awakening rays about me, *So long !*

Remember my words, I may again return,  
I love you, I depart from materials,  
I am as one disembodied, triumphant, dead.

## SANDS AT SEVENTY

### TO THOSE WHO'VE FAIL'D

To those who've fail'd, in aspirations vast,  
To unnam'd soldiers fallen in front on the lead,  
To calm, devoted engineers—to over-ardent travellers  
    —to pilots on their ships,  
To many a lofty song and picture without recognition  
    —I'd rear a laurel-cover'd monument,  
High, high above the rest—To all cut off before their  
    time,  
Possess'd by some strange spirit of fire,  
Quench'd by an early death.

### THE BRAVEST SOLDIERS

BRAVE, brave were the soldiers (high named to-day)  
    who lived through the fight ;  
But the bravest press'd to the front and fell, unnamed,  
    unknown.

### AS I SIT WRITING HERE

As I sit writing here, sick and grown old,  
Not my least burden is that dullness of the years,  
    querilities,  
Ungracious glooms, aches, lethargy, constipation,  
    whimpering ennui,  
May filter in my daily songs.

### THE FIRST DANDELION

SIMPLE and fresh and fair from winter's close emerging,  
As if no artifice of fashion, business, politics, had ever  
    been,  
Forth from its sunny nook of shelter'd grass—innocent,  
    golden, calm as the dawn,  
The spring's first dandelion shows its trustful face.

## AMERICA

CENTRE of equal daughters, equal sons,  
 All, all alike endear'd, grown, ungrown, young or old,  
 Strong, ample, fair, enduring, capable, rich,  
 Perennial with the Earth, with Freedom, Law and  
     Love,  
 A grand, sane, towering, seated Mother,  
 Chair'd in the adamant of Time.

## AFTER THE DAZZLE OF DAY

AFTER the dazzle of day is gone,  
 Only the dark, dark night shows to my eyes the stars ;  
 After the clangour of organ majestic, or chorus, or  
     perfect band,  
 Silent, athwart my soul, moves the symphony true.

## HALCYON DAYS

Nor from successful love alone,  
 Nor wealth, nor honour'd middle age, nor victories of  
     politics or war ;  
 But as life wanes, and all the turbulent passions calm,  
 As gorgeous, vapoury, silent hues cover the evening sky,  
 As softness, fullness, rest, suffuse the frame, like  
     fresher, balmier air,  
 As the days take on a mellow light, and the apple at  
     last hangs really finish'd and indolent-ripe on the  
     tree,  
 Then for the teeming quietest, happiest days of all !  
 The brooding and blissful halcyon days !

## HAD I THE CHOICE

HAD I the choice to tally greatest bards,  
 To limn their portraits, stately, beautiful, and emulate  
     at will,  
 Homer with all his wars and warriors—Hector, Achilles,  
     Ajax,

Or Shakespeare's woe-entangled Hamlet, Lear, Othello  
 —Tennyson's fair ladies,  
 Metre or wit the best, or choice conceit to wield in  
 perfect rhyme, delight of singers ;  
 These, these, O sea, all these I'd gladly barter,  
 Would you the undulation of one wave, its trick to me  
 transfer,  
 Or breathe one breath of yours upon my verse,  
 And leave its odour there.

### WITH HUSKY-HAUGHTY LIPS, O SEA !

WITH husky-haughty lips, O sea !  
 Where day and night I wend thy surf-beat shore,  
 Imaging to my sense thy varied strange suggestions,  
 (I see and plainly list thy talk and conference here,)  
 Thy troops of white-maned racers racing to the goal,  
 Thy ample, smiling face, dash'd with the sparkling  
 dimples of the sun,  
 Thy brooding scowl and murk—thy unloos'd hurri-  
 canes,  
 Thy unsubduedness, caprices, wilfulness ;  
 Great as thou art above the rest, thy many tears—  
 a lack from all eternity in thy content,  
 (Naught but the greatest struggles, wrongs, defeats,  
 could make thee greatest—no less could make  
 thee,)  
 Thy lonely state—something thou ever seek'st and  
 seek'st, yet never gain'st,  
 Surely some right withheld—some voice, in huge  
 monotonous rage, of freedom-lover pent,  
 Some vast heart, like a planet's, chain'd and chafing  
 in those breakers,  
 By lengthen'd swell, and spasm, and panting breath,  
 And rhythmic rasping of thy sands and waves,  
 And serpent hiss, and savage peals of laughter,  
 And undertones of distant lion roar,  
 (Sounding, appealing to the sky's deaf ear—but now  
 rapport for once,

A phantom in the night thy confidant for once,  
The first and last confession of the globe,  
Outsurging, muttering from thy soul's abysms,  
The tale of cosmic elemental passion,  
Thou tellest to a kindred soul.

## CONTINUITIES

*(From a talk I had lately with a German spiritualist.)*

NOTHING is ever really lost, or can be lost,  
No birth, identity, form—no object of the world,  
Nor life, nor force, nor any visible thing ;  
Appearance must not foil, nor shifted sphere confuse  
thy brain.

Ample are time and space—ample the fields of Nature.  
The body; sluggish, aged, cold—the embers left from  
earlier fires,

The light in the eye grown dim, shall duly flame  
again ;

The sun now low in the west rises for mornings and for  
noons continual ;

To frozen clods ever the spring's invisible law returns,  
With grass and flowers and summer fruits and corn.

## THANKS IN OLD AGE

THANKS in old age—thanks ere I go,  
For health, the midday sun, the impalpable air—for  
life, mere life,

For precious ever-lingering memories, (of you my  
mother dear—you, father—you, brothers, sisters,  
friends,)

For all my days—not those of peace alone—the days  
of war the same,

For gentle words, caresses, gifts from foreign lands,

For shelter, wine and meat—for sweet appreciation,

(You distant, dim unknown—or young or old—count-  
less, unspecified, readers belov'd,



We never met, and ne'er shall meet—and yet our souls  
embrace, long, close and long ;)  
For beings, groups, love, deeds, words, books—for  
colours, forms,  
For all the brave strong men—devoted, hardy men—  
who've forward sprung in freedom's help, all years,  
all lands,  
For braver, stronger, more devoted men—(a special  
laurel ere I go, to life's war's chosen ones,  
The cannoneers of song and thought—the great  
artillerists—the foremost leaders, captains of the  
soul :)  
As soldier from an ended war return'd—As traveller  
out of myriads, to the long procession retrospec-  
tive,  
Thanks—joyful thanks !—a soldier's, traveller's thanks.

### THE VOICE OF THE RAIN

AND who art thou ? said I to the soft-falling shower,  
Which, strange to tell, gave me an answer, as here  
translated :  
I am the Poem of Earth, said the voice of the rain,  
Eternal I rise impalpable out of the land and the  
bottomless sea,  
Upward to heaven, whence, vaguely form'd, altogether  
changed, and yet the same,  
I descend to lave the drouths, atomies, dust-layers of  
the globe,  
And all that in them without me were seeds only,  
latent, unborn ;  
And forever, by day and night, I give back life to my  
own origin, and make pure and beautify it ;  
(For song, issuing from its birth-place, after fulfilment,  
wandering,  
Reck'd or unreck'd, duly with love returns.)

## SOON SHALL THE WINTER'S FOIL BE HERE

SOON shall the winter's foil be here ;  
 Soon shall these icy ligatures unbind and melt—A little  
 while,  
 And air, soil, wave, suffused shall be in softness, bloom  
 and growth—a thousand forms shall rise  
 From these dead clods and chills as from low burial  
 graves.  
 Thine eyes, ears—all thy best attributes—all that takes  
 cognizance of natural beauty,  
 Shall wake and fill. Thou shalt perceive the simple  
 shows, the delicate miracles of earth,  
 Dandelions, clover, the emerald grass, the early scents  
 and flowers,  
 The arbutus under foot, the willow's yellow-green, the  
 blossoming plum and cherry ;  
 With these the robin, lark and thrush, singing their  
 songs—the fitting bluebird ;  
 For such the scenes the annual play brings on.

## STRONGER LESSONS

HAVE you learn'd lessons only of those who admired  
 you, and were tender with you, and stood aside  
 for you ?  
 Have you not learn'd great lessons from those who  
 reject you, and brace themselves against you ?  
 or who treat you with contempt, or dispute the  
 passage with you ?

## YOU LINGERING SPARSE LEAVES OF ME

YOU lingering sparse leaves of me on winter-nearing  
 boughs,  
 And I some well-shorn tree of field or orchard-row ;  
 You tokens diminute and lorn—(not now the flush of  
 May, or July clover-bloom—no grain of August  
 now ;)

### 374 YOU LINGERING SPARSE LEAVES OF ME

You pallid banner-staves—you pennants valueless—  
you overstay'd of time,  
Yet my soul-dearest leaves confirming all the rest,  
The faithfulest—hardiest—last.

### NOT MEAGRE, LATENT BOUGHS ALONE

Not meagre, latent boughs alone, O songs ! (scaly and  
bare, like eagles' talons,)  
But haply for some sunny day (who knows ?) some  
future spring, some summer—bursting forth,  
To verdant leaves, or sheltering shade—to nourishing  
fruit,  
Apples and grapes—the stalwart limbs of trees emerg-  
ing—the fresh, free, open air,  
And love and faith, like scented roses blooming.

### THE DISMANTLED SHIP

In some unused lagoon, some nameless bay,  
On sluggish, lonesome waters, anchor'd near the  
shore,  
An old, dismasted, grey and batter'd ship, disabled,  
done,  
After free voyages to all the seas of earth, haul'd up at  
last and hawser'd tight,  
Lies rusting, mouldering.

### OLD AGE'S LAMBENT PEAKS

THE touch of flame—the illuminating fire—the loftiest  
look at last,  
O'er city, passion, sea—o'er prairie, mountain, wood—  
the earth itself ;  
The airy, different, changing hues of all, in falling  
twilight,  
Objects and groups, bearings, faces, reminiscences ;  
The calmer sight—the golden setting, clear and broad :

So much i' the atmosphere, the points of view, the  
situations whence we scan,  
Bro't out by them alone—so much (perhaps the best)  
unreck'd before ;  
The lights indeed from them—old age's lambent peaks.

### AFTER THE SUPPER AND TALK

AFTER the supper and talk—after the day is done,  
As a friend from friends his final withdrawal prolonging,  
Good-bye and Good-bye with emotional lips repeating,  
(So hard for his hand to release those hands—no more  
will they meet,  
No more for communion of sorrow and joy, of old and  
young,  
A far-stretching journey awaits him, to return no more,)  
Shunning, postponing severance—seeking to ward off  
the last word ever so little,  
E'en at the exit-door turning—charges superfluous  
calling back—e'en as he descends the steps,  
Something to eke out a minute additional—shadows of  
nightfall deepening,  
Farewells, messages lessening—dimmer the forthgoer's  
visage and form,  
Soon to be lost for aye in the darkness—loath, O so  
loath to depart !  
Garrulous to the very last.

# GOOD-BYE MY FANCY

## MY 71st YEAR

AFTER surmounting three-score and ten,  
With all their chances, changes, losses, sorrows,  
My parents' deaths, the vagaries of my life, the many  
tearing passions of me, the war of '63 and '4,  
As some old broken soldier, after a long, hot, wearying  
march, or haply after battle,  
To-day at twilight, hobbling, answering company roll-  
call, *Here*, with vital voice,  
Reporting yet, saluting yet the Officer over all.

## TO THE SUN-SET BREEZE

AH, whispering, something again, unseen,  
Where late this heated day thou enterest at my window,  
door,  
Thou, laving, tempering all, cool-freshing, gently  
vitalizing  
Me, old, alone, sick, weak-down, melted-worn with  
sweat;  
Thou, nestling, folding close and firm yet soft, com-  
panion better than talk, book, art,  
(Thou hast, O Nature! elements! utterance to my  
heart beyond the rest—and this is of them,)  
So sweet thy primitive taste to breathe within—thy  
soothing fingers on my face and hands,  
Thou, messenger-magical strange bringer to body and  
spirit of me,  
(Distances balk'd—occult medicines penetrating me  
from head to foot)  
I feel the sky, the prairies vast—I feel the mighty  
northern lakes,  
I feel the ocean and the forest—somehow I feel the  
globe itself swift-swimming in space;

Thou blown from lips so loved, now gone—haply from  
endless store, God-sent,  
(For thou art spiritual, Godly, most of all known to my  
sense,)  
Minister to speak to me, here and now, what word has  
never told, and cannot tell,  
Art thou not universal concrete's distillation ? Law's,  
all Astronomy's last refinement ?  
Hast thou no soul ? Can I not know, identify thee ?

## WHEN THE FULL-GROWN POET CAME

WHEN the full-grown poet came,  
Out spake pleased Nature (the round impassive globe,  
with all its shows of day and night,) saying, *He is  
mine ;*  
But out spake too the Soul of man, proud, jealous and  
unreconciled, *Nay, he is mine alone ;*  
—Then the full-grown poet stood between the two, and  
took each by the hand ;  
And to-day and ever so stands, as blender, uniter,  
tightly holding hands,  
Which he will never release until he reconciles the  
two,  
And wholly and joyously blends them.

## THE COMMONPLACE

THE commonplace I sing ;  
How cheap is health ! how cheap nobility !  
Abstinence, no falsehood, no gluttony, lust ;  
The open air I sing, freedom, toleration,  
(Take here the mainest lesson—less from books—less  
from the schools,)  
The common day and night—the common earth and  
waters,  
Your farm—your work, trade, occupation,  
The democratic wisdom underneath, like solid ground  
for all.

## L. OF G.'S PURPORT

Not to exclude or demarcate, or pick out evils from  
 their formidable masses (even to expose them),  
 But add, fuse, complete, extend—and celebrate the  
 immortal and the good.

Haughty this song, its words and scope,  
 To span vast realms of space and time,  
 Evolution—the cumulative—growths and generations.

Begun in ripen'd youth and steadily pursued,  
 Wandering, peering, dallying with all—war, peace, day  
 and night absorbing,  
 Never even for one brief hour abandoning my task,  
 I end it here in sickness, poverty, and old age.

I sing of life, yet mind me well of death :  
 To-day shadowy Death dogs my steps, my seated shape,  
 and has for years—  
 Draws sometimes close to me, as face to face.

## GRAND IS THE SEEN

GRAND is the seen, the light, to me—grand are the sky  
 and stars,  
 Grand is the earth, and grand are lasting time and  
 space,  
 And grand their laws, so multiform, puzzling, evolu-  
 tionary ;  
 But grander far the unseen soul of me, comprehending,  
 endowing all those,  
 Lighting the light, the sky and stars, delving the earth,  
 sailing the sea,  
 (What were all those, indeed, without thee, unseen  
 soul ? of what amount without thee ?)  
 More evolutionary, vast, puzzling, O my soul !  
 More multiform far—more lasting thou than they.

## GOOD-BYE MY FANCY !

GOOD-BYE my Fancy !

Farewell dear mate, dear love !

I'm going away, I know not where,

Or to what fortune, or whether I may ever see you again,

So Good-bye my Fancy.

Now for my last—let me look back a moment ;

The slower fainter ticking of the clock is in me,

Exit, nightfall, and soon the heart-thud stopping.

Long have we lived, joy'd, caress'd together ;

Delightful !—now separation—Good-bye my Fancy.

Yet let me not be too hasty,

Long indeed have we lived, slept, filter'd, become really  
blended into one ;

Then if we die we die together, (yes, we'll remain one,)

If we go anywhere we'll go together to meet what  
happens,

Maybe we'll be better off and blither, and learn some-  
thing,

Maybe it is yourself now really ushering me to the true  
songs, (who knows ?)

Maybe it is you the mortal knob really undoing,  
turning—so now finally,

Good-bye—and hail ! my Fancy.



## OLD AGE ECHOES

### TO SOAR IN FREEDOM AND IN FULLNESS OF POWER

I HAVE not so much emulated the birds that musically  
sing,  
I have abandon'd myself to flights, broad circles.  
The hawk, the seagull, have far more possess'd me than  
the canary or mocking-bird.  
I have not felt to warble and trill, however sweetly,  
I have felt to soar in freedom and in the fullness of  
power, joy, volition.

### OF MANY A SMUTCH'D DEED REMINISCENT

FULL of wickedness, I—of many a smutch'd deed  
reminiscent — of worse deeds capable,  
Yet I look composedly upon nature, drink day and  
night the joys of life, and await death with perfect  
equanimity,  
Because of my tender and boundless love for him I love  
and because of his boundless love for me.

### DEATH'S VALLEY

*To accompany a picture; by request. 'The Valley of the  
Shadow of Death,' from the painting by George Inness.*

NAY, do not dream, designer dark,  
Thou hast portray'd or hit thy theme entire;  
I, hoverer of late by this dark valley, by its confines,  
having glimpses of it,  
Here enter lists with thee, claiming my right to make  
a symbol too.  
For I have seen many wounded soldiers die,  
After dreadful suffering—have seen their lives pass off  
with smiles;

And I have watch'd the death-hours of the old ; and  
seen the infant die ;  
The rich, with all his nurses and his doctors ;  
And then the poor, in meagreness and poverty ;  
And I myself for long, O Death, have breath'd my  
every breath  
Amid the nearness and the silent thought of thee.

And out of these and thee,  
I make a scene, a song (not fear of thee,  
Nor gloom's ravines, nor bleak, nor dark—for I do not  
fear thee,  
Nor celebrate the struggle, or contortion, or hard-tied  
knot),  
Of the broad blessed light and perfect air, with  
meadows, rippling tides, and trees and flowers and  
grass,  
And the low hum of living breeze—and in the midst  
God's beautiful eternal right hand,  
Thee, holiest minister of Heaven—thee, envoy, usherer,  
guide at last of all,  
Rich, florid, loosener of the stricture-knot call'd life,  
Sweet, peaceful, welcome Death.

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